

3 Lebanese civilians killed in mine blasts

TYRE (AFP) — Three Lebanese civilians were killed and a fourth wounded on Friday in mine blasts near the self-declared Israeli "security zone" in southern Lebanon, Lebanese police said. A 17-year-old shepherd was killed when a mine exploded near the village of Majdal Siltm, police said. Two other villagers who went to rescue him died in a second blast and a third was seriously wounded, the police said. A leader of Hezbollah, Sheikh Nabil Qauq, said Israel was responsible for the deaths of the civilians. He also said that the Lebanese "resistance will make Israel pay for its crime." A Lebanese police officer who requested anonymity said the four were "probably victims of an Israeli minefield around Tallusa." The victims were taken to a Lebanese government hospital in Tyre.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تيمز يومية سياسية تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية "الرأي"

UAE to make low-key appearance at Tehran meeting

TEHRAN (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE), locked in a rumbling territorial dispute with Iran, will make a symbolic appearance at a meeting of Islamic foreign ministers here, the official IRNA news agency said Friday. "The Emirates will be represented by an official from their foreign ministry who will represent the Emirati foreign minister," said IRNA. UAE foreign ministry official Mohammed Khalifa Al Suyeh arrived in Tehran late Thursday to attend the meeting of foreign ministers of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on Dec. 6 and 7.

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King renews confidence in Majali; letter signals imminent reshuffle

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein has expressed renewed confidence in Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, describing him as "a man of integrity and sincerity; courageous in the fight for right and good, honest in carrying out the duties [he has] been charged with and a companion in the march to build our nation."

In a letter he sent to Dr. Majali on Thursday, King Hussein said: "You have in the past as well as the present enjoyed my utmost trust and confidence as Prime Minister... Most Jordanians of various origins in this country share with me this confidence in you."

"By Jordanians I mean even those who differ with you and us in opinion and stands, as long as this is all within the framework of constructive endeavour and has a noble objective, with true and sincere loyalty to the homeland," the King said.

Dr. Majali was appointed in March to supervise the Nov. 4 general elections, the first since Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994.

Many speculated that he would be replaced after the polls.

But in the letter, which focused on Jordan's position on the peace process, the King hailed the Prime Minister's leadership skills and his role in conducting free and democratic elections — a main point that was held against the Cabinet by its vocal opposition, led by the Islamists.

His Majesty said he was sending Dr. Majali the letter "after the opening of the 13th Parliament, brought about by elections that were fair by any standards. Through these elections, the people chose a group of representatives from the very core of this land, thus



contributing to the making of a bright present and, with God's help, a promising future for future generations to enjoy."

Officials and analysts said the King's renewed confidence in Dr. Majali indicated that he was likely to stay on for months with the main task of introducing new legislation concerning political parties, professional unions and elections.

It was not clear after the letter whether the premier might introduce a reshuffle to his 24-member Cabinet after the Council of Ministers and, if so, whether he would do so after submitting to a vote of confidence from the newly-elected Parliament.

Over 55 deputies in the 80-seat Lower House, dominated by tribal leaders, centrists and pro-establishment figures, are expected to vote in favour of the government possibly a few days after their parliamentary debate begins on Dec. 20.

Others, including about 16 opposition deputies — Islamists, pan-Arabists,

leftists and independents — are likely to vote against the government.

"For the time being, His Majesty has reinstated his confidence in Dr. Majali," a senior government official told the Jordan Times.

Another official added: "Dr. Majali's government will first seek Parliament's confidence and after that, the premier will most likely introduce some changes to the make-up of his team."

The election process was marred by allegations over election irregularities — a charge firmly denied by the government.

The King's letter was published hours after several members in the 40-member Royal-appointed Senate raised concern over the fairness of the elections during a session held to discuss their draft reply to the King's Speech from the Throne.

Former Prime Minister Mudar Badran, supported by at least 10 other senators, suggested dropping the word "fair" in a sentence in which the Upper

House would have

Following is the complete text of His Majesty's letter to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali:

His Excellency Dr. Abdul Salam Al Majali, our dear Prime Minister,

Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings.

You have, in the past as well as the present enjoyed my utmost trust and confidence as the Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Today, I renew this confidence in you, one that I have no doubt is shared by the majority of Jordanians of all origins; children of this very state that embraces them and others who may differ with you and us in opinion and stance, as long as this is done within the framework of constructive initiatives, noble objectives and sincere loyalty to a nation built on a true

sense of belonging. When we, along with Jordanians, renew our confidence in your person as Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, it is because we have known you to be a man of integrity and sincerity, courageous in the fight for right and good, honest in carrying out the duties you have been charged with and a companion in the march to build our nation.

I address this letter to you following the opening of the Thirteenth Parliament brought about by elections that were fair by any standards. Through these elections, the people chose a group of representatives from the very core of this

(Continued on page 7)

King's letter clarified Jordan's position on Palestine — official

By Alia A. Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein, angered by "baseless" Israeli suggestions that Jordan was against the creation of a Palestinian state, has said he would do his utmost to back Palestinian aspirations.

In a letter to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Thursday, the King also sought to prevent Israel from exploiting possible Arab differences to create tension between Jordan and its key peace partners, the Palestinians and Egypt, official Jordanian sources said Friday.

His Majesty accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of attempting to demolish the

Palestinian-Israeli Oslo peace agreements and of changing the "very essence and facets of the peace process."

He also outlined Jordan's stand vis-a-vis controversial final status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians that will tackle issues such as borders, settlements, sovereignty, the final status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, security and water.

Most of these issues are linked to Jordan because it ruled the West Bank from 1950 until Israel occupied it in 1967, and because of the large Palestinian presence in the Kingdom.

"His Majesty's letter came in response to

(Continued on page 7)

Iraq suspends oil exports in dismay over disapproval of aid distribution scheme

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq Friday halted pumping oil via a Turkish pipeline following its announcement it would suspend oil exports in protest at the U.N. Security Council's failure to approve an aid distribution plan, the Anatolia news agency reported.

"The oil flow stopped today," the agency quoted a Turkish energy official as saying.

An Iraqi foreign ministry official said Friday that "Iraq deeply regrets that the Security Council renewed the oil-for-food accord without taking into consideration the need for simultaneous oil sales and distribution of food and medicines."

"In order for that to happen, Iraq has decided not to export its crude oil for the third stage of the oil-for-food accord until the plan for the distribution of humanitarian aid is approved," he added. Iraq has often criticised the oil-for-food deal, which authorises Iraq to sell \$2 billion worth of oil every six months to buy food and medicines, for failing to deliver sufficient supplies.

Baghdad has repeatedly accused Washington and Lon-

don of holding up contract approvals under the programme.

Iraq previously suspended its oil exports from June 17 to Aug. 14 to protest delays in the arrival of humanitarian supplies since the deal went into force in December 1996, the first easing of crippling seven-year-old sanctions.

On Thursday the U.N. Security Council renewed the deal with Iraq for another six months but delayed a possible expansion of the scheme.

The 15-member Security Council, expressing concern about the nutritional and health situation in Iraq, unanimously adopted Resolution 1143 providing for the third phase of the humanitarian arrangement to come into effect at 0501 GMT

Friday.

The renewal came after two days of negotiations in which the French and Russian delegations forced the resolution's U.S. and British co-sponsors to give a clear indication that an increase would be considered in two months' time.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan told journalists Thursday that an overall review of the plan's implementation was required. He said he would report on the program again in January, and that his next report would also contain recommendations on tightening up the programme's implementation. Mr. Annan has blamed problems plaguing the program both on the United Nations and the Iraqi government.

Turkey launches offensive against Kurds in Iraq

ANKARA (AP) — Some 20,000 Turkish troops launched an offensive against Turkish Kurds in northern Iraq on Friday. Interior Minister Murat Basessigoglu, quoted by Anatolia news agency during a visit to Bulgaria, said Kurdistan Democratic Party was assisting with around 8,000 fighters. The party has long supported Turkish military units in the Kurdish enclave. The war between Turkish forces and the Kurdish rebels has claimed some 28,000 lives since 1984.

Palestinian child critically hurt in Israeli shooting on protesters

RAFAH (AFP) — A young Palestinian boy was critically injured and five others wounded when Israeli soldiers opened fire Friday with live ammunition on Palestinian protesters in Rafah, hospital officials said.

Ahmad Hijazi, 3, was struck by a live bullet in the mouth and was in critical condition after the shooting outside at the town of Rafah on the southern tip of the Gaza Strip, they said.

The incident began when soldiers barred a crowd of some 200 Palestinians from conducting a prayer protest on a piece of farmland which the army has seized to expand a post on the Gaza-Egypt border, witnesses said.

The Palestinians had gathered to protest the seizure of the land, which they say is owned by the Zaarab family



Palestinians carry away to an ambulance a wounded colleague hurt in clashes with Israeli soldiers near Rafah, in Gaza Strip, Friday (Reuters photo)

in Rafah. Scuffles broke out between protesters and soldiers, and a few youths lit fire to a tire, witnesses said. Then soldiers suddenly opened fire with live ammunition and shot massive volleys of tear gas at the crowd, which dispersed in a panic, witnesses said. The protests ended after the shooting.

Albright urges both sides to 'take bold decisions' to revive Mideast peace process Netanyahu meets with German, French officials to promote withdrawal plan; Albright meets Arafat today

Combined agency dispatches

U.S. SECRETARY of State Madeleine Albright urged Israeli and Palestinian leaders Friday to take "bold decisions" to revive the deadlocked peace process — and welcomed an Israeli redeployment initiative.

Speaking after talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, she said she would recommend the Israeli decision to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat when she meets him today in Geneva.

"I will be saying to Chairman Arafat that I think he needs to take note of the Israeli cabinet decision, that we take it seriously and he should take it seriously," she told a joint press conference. The Palestinian council on Thursday dismissed the plan, details of which appeared in press leaks.

Ms. Albright conceded: "These are complicated issues. The time is not on the

side of those who make peace. If Israel and the Palestinians are prepared to make bold decisions, we will be by their side every step of the way."

Ms. Albright told reporters that Israeli cabinet approval last Sunday of a partial withdrawal from the West Bank was a "welcome decision in principle."

Although Mr. Netanyahu again failed to provide details of the withdrawal proposal, as Washington had requested, Ms. Albright described the talks as "useful and substantive."

"When I met Prime Minister Netanyahu two weeks ago I emphasised that the time had come to move on with the peace process. Since then the Israeli cabinet has taken a welcome decision in principle to undertake a further redeployment."

"Today I discussed with the prime minister the importance of that further redeployment."

The cabinet decided to

make a single withdrawal in place of the first two specified in the peace accords and said the Palestinians should then forego the third and move straight to talks on a final settlement.

Ms. Albright called on Mr. Arafat to make more efforts on security issues, a key Israeli concern.

"The Palestinians have a responsibility in working on the security side of this equation. They have to make 100 per cent effort on this."

Earlier Friday, Mr. Netanyahu said after a 90-minute meeting with French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin that the Palestinians must demonstrate their commitment to ensuring security in the West Bank before Israel could make any further troop withdrawal.

He proposed a five-month period to enable the Palestinians to "be able to discharge their obligations, especially in the field of security, in order to ensure that any territory handed

over does not become a sanctuary of terrorism."

Mr. Netanyahu gave no further details of the proposed redeployment. "I do not have maps or figures concerning the scope of the troop redeployment," he told Israeli radio.

Israeli press reports have indicated that Mr. Netanyahu was prepared to cede only seven to eight per cent of the West Bank, 70 per cent of which remains under full Israeli control.

Three per cent of the territory is entirely under Palestinian control, while control of the remaining 27 per cent is shared.

Palestinians insist that interim accords signed by Mr. Netanyahu commit him to three separate withdrawals, handing over an additional 60 per cent of the West Bank at this stage of the negotiations.

The urgency of Ms. Albright's request for the meeting was evident in that it took the prime minister

away from Israel in the midst of one of the worst strikes in its 50-year history.

On the other hand, Chancellor Helmut Kohl urged Mr. Netanyahu to stick to Israel's commitments for troop withdrawals from the West Bank, a Kohl spokesman said Friday.

The talks late Thursday centred on "security, settlement activity and troop reductions," government spokesman, Peter Hausmann, said in a statement.

Mr. Hausmann said Mr. Kohl showed great understanding for Israel's security wishes, "and encouraged Prime Minister Netanyahu emphatically toward the further implementation of the agreements of Oslo and Hebron."

The German chancellor also promised Mr. Netanyahu that the EU would do everything it could to support the Mideast peace process, Mr. Hausmann said.

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Islamic states urged to reject Israel, U.S. at Tehran prayers

TEHRAN (AFP) — An influential Iranian cleric on Friday urged Muslim leaders gathering for a summit here to reject all contact with Israel and the United States, accusing the two countries of being enemies of Islam.

"Our main problem in the Islamic World is Israel and the United States," Ayatollah Ahmad Janati told worshippers at Friday prayers at Tehran University.

Ayatollah Janati, a hard-line conservative close to Iran's paramount leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said next week's summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Tehran would be a triumph over Washington.

"America and Israel must be going blind from jeal-

ously seeing the high-turnout for the conference in spite of the hostility and mischievous efforts by these two countries to ensure a low-turnout," said Ayatollah Janati.

"America does everything to satisfy Israel and ignores over one billion Muslims. They do not care about the Muslims and prefer Israel to us," he added.

Many diplomats and officials from the 55 countries expected to attend the Dec. 9-11 OIC summit in Tehran were among the several thousand faithful attending the prayers.

A host of foreign ministers from OIC countries also started arriving in Tehran on Friday to take part in two days of talks to prepare the ground for next

week's full summit.

Ayatollah Janati urged all Muslim countries attending the summit to turn their backs on the Arab-Israeli peace process.

"It does not make sense to seek rapprochement with Israel. The peace process is the big lie. How can you reach a settlement with a thief, with an occupier. Either choose Israel or the world of Islam."

OIC officials have already drawn up a string of resolutions condemning Israel to be included in the summit's final statement on Dec. 11.

Tehran has been opposed to the Arab-Israeli peace process since it was launched at the Madrid conference in 1991, and officials here have said the Islamic Republic will have

a strong input in drawing up the wording of the resolutions on Israel.

Ayatollah Janati also called on all Muslim countries to reject the corrupting influence of Western culture.

"Our biggest problem in the Islamic World is the corrupt and depraved culture of the West," he said. And he turned to the theme of the summit, unity in the Islamic World, saying that without unity "all these summits and resolutions will be useless."

Iranian officials say all 55 OIC countries have pledged to attend next week's summit, the largest international event hosted by Tehran since the 1979 Islamic revolution.



Iraqi poor people sit outside a Baghdad mosque, waiting with empty bowls for weekly food handouts from the mosque, after Friday's main midday prayers Iraq, under stringent trade sanctions since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, has rejected a U.N. decision to renew the oil-for-food deal, saying it would not sell any oil until its grievances over slow food and medical supplies distribution were met (Reuters photo)

Israel arrests 10 suspected PFLP members

RAMALLAH (AFP) — The Israeli army arrested 10 Palestinians linked to left-wing groups in raids on villages around the West Bank town of Ramallah, Palestinian security sources said Friday.

The 10, suspected of membership in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), were seized in pre-dawn raids on Thursday and Friday from Jalazun refugee camp and the village of Deir Qaddis, the sources said.

The arrests followed the announcement by Palestinian police on Tuesday that they had arrested a PFLP member

in the village of Rafat outside Nablus who had planned to conduct a major anti-Israeli suicide bombing.

The Israeli army has conducted a major crackdown in the West Bank since two suicide bombings in Jerusalem in July and September conducted by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas).

But until now, the hundreds of Palestinians arrested in the crackdown have mostly come from the ranks of Hamas or the smaller group Islamic Jihad, not the PFLP, which is known mainly for drive-by shootings against Israelis, rather than large-scale suicide attacks.

Qadhafi pledges aid against Israeli occupation of Lebanon

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi pledged aid Thursday for the campaign against Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, Libyan television reported.

He made the promise in a telephone conversation with Lebanese President Elias Hrawi, in which he agreed to a request "to provide help to the Lebanese people in resisting Israeli occupation," the television said.

It did not specify the nature of the help that would be provided by Libya, which is regarded as a principal financier of a number of Lebanese and Palestinian movements opposed to Israel.

The most active of the

guerrilla groups in southern Lebanon is the Lebanese Shiite group Hizbollah. Another Shiite group, Amal, which is led by the speaker of the Lebanese parliament Nabih Berri, is also active, as are several Palestinian factions based in refugee camps in Lebanon.

But Libya has been on bad terms with the Lebanese Shiites since the 1979 disappearance of their spiritual leader, Imam Moussa Sadr, during a visit to Tripoli.

Col. Qadhafi said Libya would also expand its trade with Lebanon and agreed to "open Libyan markets to Lebanese agricultural produce" as requested by President Hrawi, the television reported without elaborating.

Arafat to visit Qatar on way to Tehran

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will visit Qatar to meet its Emir Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Thani before heading to Iran to attend a summit of Islamic countries, a top Arafat aide said Friday.

President Arafat will meet Sheikh Hamad on Sunday to coordinate positions before Tehran's Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) summit "to produce effective decisions on Arab issues," Tayeb Abdul Rahim told AFP.

Palestinian sources said President Arafat would visit Egypt on Sunday for talks with President Hosni

Mubarak before heading on to Qatar.

He will then go on to Iran for his first visit in over 15 years to attend the conference, scheduled from Dec. 9-11, which gathers all 55 OIC members. The Palestinians joined a boycott by most Arab countries of the Middle East economic conference held in Qatar in November to protest the stalled peace process with Israel, a boycott which enraged Qatari officials.

Mr. Arafat will come to Qatar from Geneva, where he is to meet U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Saturday.

Cyprus releases stateless Palestinian bomber

NICOSIA (R) — The Cyprus supreme court on Friday ordered the release of a stateless Palestinian, held in detention for 16 months after completing a jail sentence because no country wanted to take him in, lawyers said.

The court ordered the immediate and unconditional release of Omar Hawillo, accepting his habeas corpus application to be set free because the authorities were holding him without any legal grounds.

"He will remain in Cyprus for the time being," his lawyer Nicos Papatilakides said.

"I agreed with the attorney-general that we will be meeting with the immigration officer to settle the terms of his stay."

Mr. Hawillo was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment on manslaughter charges by a Cyprus court in 1988 for his part in a bungled bomb attack on

the Israeli embassy in Nicosia which killed three people.

He pleaded guilty to two counts of manslaughter.

When his prison sentence expired in August 1996 he remained in detention because no country wanted to take him in.

"I just want to tell the relatives of those people that I am really sorry about what happened," Mr. Hawillo, 31, told Reuters in the courtroom after the court issued the ruling, referring to the victims of the bomb attack.

Mr. Hawillo, who came to Cyprus as an English language student from Lebanon, was arrested in May 1988 after a jeep rigged with explosives blew up on a busy bridge in the capital Nicosia, close to the Israeli embassy.

Minutes earlier the driver of the jeep had twice tried to park the vehicle outside the embassy, but was prevented from doing so by security personnel.

It was never clarified who detonated the explosives, or which group was behind the attack.

Two Cypriot passers-by and the Palestinian driver of the jeep, Mr. Hawillo's suspected accomplice, were killed.

When his prison term ended last year Mr. Hawillo was deported to Lebanon, but was sent back to Cyprus when the Lebanese authorities discovered his passport was forged.

Mr. Hawillo had been held in police detention in a wing of Cyprus's central prison since then, unable to find a country willing to grant him a passport. The staged several hunger strikes to draw attention to his case.

"I am going to get a job, work until I can find a country... at least I will be far away from prison," he said.

Iran, Iraq agree to improve ties

TEHRAN (AFP) — The foreign ministers of Iran and Iraq agreed here Friday to patch up differences that have dogged relations since the end of their 1980-1988 war.

Kamal Kharazi and Mohammad Said Al Sabah met on the sidelines of a preparatory meeting for the summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) due to be held here Dec. 9-11.

The two men agreed to hold further meetings after the summit "to examine strengthening Iraqi-Iranian relations," the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported in a dispatch from Tehran.

They "laid emphasis on the need to speed up efforts to resolve the problem of prisoners" from their 1980-1988

war, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said.

The PoWs issue has been the main stumbling block to normalising relations.

Iran released nearly 500 PoWs in the run-up to the summit last Thursday, a gesture which Iraq expressed its appreciation for, but judged insufficient.

It nonetheless reciprocated by returning two Iraqis detained in Iraq in 1991.

Baghdad says it has freed all Iranian PoWs except for one pilot and that 18,000 Iraqi PoWs registered with the International Committee of the Red Cross are still being held in Iran.

Tehran says Iraq still holds at least 5,000 of its soldiers.

Mr. Kharazi "extended his sympathy to the Iraqi people for the ordeals they had endured," adding that "confidence between regional states is essential for the improvement of relations and the settlement of problems," IRNA reported.

Mr. Sabah said the forthcoming Islamic summit would be "very important" and "all the more so for being held in Tehran," the news agency added.

Mr. Sabah is accompanied by an important Iraqi delegation, including Islamic Endowments Minister Abdul Munem Ahmad Saleh and Iraq's representative at the Arab League Nabil Nijm.

Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan is to head the delegation to the summit itself, Iraq announced Tuesday.

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14:10Twinkle
14:30Muppet Show
15:00The Ultimate Stuntman
16:00Beakman's World
16:30Neighbours
17:00French programmes
19:00Le Journal
19:30News headlines
19:35Perspective
20:00 Comedy - Perfect Strangers
20:30Prism
21:10Time Trax
22:00News in English
22:30Feature film
23:59Ellen

PRAYER TIMES

04:55Fajr
06:17(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:25Dhuhr
14:13Asr
16:36Maghreb
17:58Isha

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cool at night and winds westerly, easterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min/Max temp. Amman 19/21 Aqaba 13/25 Deserts 06/21 Jordan Valley 12/24

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 18 Aqaba 24 Humidity readings: Amman 46 per cent. Aqaba 34 per cent.

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WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Warm winter conditions will prevail during the day with clouds appearing at different altitudes. It will be relatively

Najih pharmacy 847632 IRIBID: Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir 276852 Al Quds pharmacy 843402 ZARQA: Dr. Nabil Saffarini 901323 Khalil pharmacy 985417

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Other Flights: 09:30Al Arish (PF) 13:15Riyadh (SV) 15:05Vienna (OS) 18:00Dubai, Damascus (EK) 21:10Paris, Damascus (AF) 21:15Athens (OA) 22:30London (BA) 22:35Cairo (MS) 23:45Amsterdam (KL) 23:45Beirut (ME) 03:25Rome (AZ)

DEPARTURES Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights: 06:20Beirut (RJ) 06:15Frankfurt (RJ) 11:30Amsterdam, New York (RJ) 12:00Milan (RJ) 12:00Paris (RJ) 12:15London (RJ) 12:30Cairo (RJ) 20:05Riyadh, Bahrain (RJ) 20:15Bombay (RJ) 20:20Lamaca (RJ) 20:30Jeddah (RJ) 21:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ) 23:59Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights: 07:00Beirut (ME) 10:30Al Arish (PF) 14:15Riyadh (SV) 15:50Vienna (OS) 23:55Damascus, Paris (AF) 00:35Amsterdam (KL) 03:00Athens (OA) 04:20Rome (AZ) 06:15Beirut (ME) 06:40Beirut, London (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) (No flights on Saturday)

CHRISTMAS CHORUS Annual Y.M.C.A. Christmas class at Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m. (t)

FILM

"Schulz and Shulz" (tpt) at the Royal Cultural Centre

LECTURE

"Poetry in Jordan" by Mohammed

EXHIBITIONS

Photo (abstract) art by Mohammed

Home M
PRINCESS OPENS CON
Alia Al Faisal Friday
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by well-known classical m
Orchestra. The concert was
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FILM
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at the Royal Cultural Centre

LECTURE
"Poetry in Jordan" by Mohammed

EXHIBITIONS
Photo (abstract) art by Mohammed
at Cultural Centre, until Dec. 7.
Street Tel. 55375981, until
by Amman Khamassah
exhibition of prints by Alger
of Mahmoud Darwish, at Dar
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by Khalid Khreis at Institut
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PRINCESS OPENS CONCERT: Deputising for Her Majesty Queen Noor, Princess Alia Al Faisal Friday opens a concert organised by the Abu Ghazaleh group to mark His Majesty King Hussein's 62nd birthday. The concert included pieces by well-known classical musicians played by the National Music Conservatory Orchestra. The concert was attended by Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji (right) and Director of Abu Ghazaleh group Talal Abu Ghazaleh, in addition to representatives of the commercial, economic, and banking sectors (Petra Photo)

Government to change passport format next year

By Ahmad Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan will change the format of its passports next year in line with attempts to facilitate the travel of its citizens worldwide, according to Director General of the Passport Department Awni Yrfas.

"These changes were made to suit the global standards of the Canada-based International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)," he stated.

"The next stage in developing the passport is computerising the data written on it" to make any attempt

to forge passports difficult, he added.

Mr. Yrfas told the Jordan Times Wednesday the national number, which is given to everyone who is included in a family book, will be displayed on the front page, instead of the back one.

The first page of the new passport will also have provisions for the full name, place and date of birth, mother's name, date of issue, and date of expiration. This information will be printed in a horizontal form instead of the present vertical form, he explained.

Current passports have

all this information scattered on the first three pages, a circumstance that often complicates visa issuance procedures.

Mr. Yrfas said the new passport's pages have been reduced to 48 from the present 63 pages. He added that the charge for issuing the new document will remain unchanged.

The new passports will be printed by a German firm through a Jordanian company that won the tender to complete the new passports. The first batches of passports have already arrived in Jordan and will be issued early next year, he said.

New water networks to begin operations by middle of month

By Ramadan Rawashdeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ) will commence operation of a new water pipe network in several districts of Amman by the middle of this month, WAJ Assistant Secretary General Sa'd Bakri recently announced.

Mr. Bakri said the newly-laid networks will replace old and leaking pipes in areas of Jabal Amman from the First Circle to the Third Circle, Jabal Weibdeh, and Wadi Saqra.

Work in these areas began in July 1995 as part of an overall network that

the government is laying in the greater Amman region in order to save the at least 35 per cent of the total water supplies that have been leaking from the old system, he stated.

Mr. Bakri told the Jordan Times that this JD4 million section of the network, known as I-A, was financed by the German Development Bank.

Another section, I-B, entails laying new water networks in Jabal Hussein, Jabal Nuzha, and Jabal Qusour, a JD4.5 million project that will be completed by March 1998, he said.

The German bank is also

financing this section of the work, which started in February 1996, he added.

The German government previously extended Jordan a DM43 million loan to help finance the second phase of rehabilitating the Amman water network. The agreement, which was signed last week, stipulates a five-year grace period for a sum of DM8 million bearing 4.5 per cent interest, and a ten-year grace period for the remaining sum at 0.75 per cent interest.

The German bank investments in Jordan over the past 30 years amount to DM342 million.

House debate on reply to Speech from the Throne centres on reference to Jerusalem

By Tareq Moumami
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Upper House of Parliament Thursday debated and endorsed the House's reply to the Speech from the Throne, which His Majesty King Hussein made on Nov. 29 at the opening of the first ordinary session of the 13th Parliament.

The House debated at length a phrase in the King's speech referring to a Palestinian state with its capital "in Jerusalem."

The debate centred on whether to maintain or to delete the phrase from the draft reply to the Speech from the Throne. While former prime minister and current Senator Mudar Badran

called for deleting the phrase "in Jerusalem" on the grounds that Jordan is not negotiating on behalf of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali called for maintaining it, noting that it has its own meaning.

Dr. Majali noted that the area constituting Jerusalem is not clearly defined. He said the city derives its sanctity from its holy places and added that "our acceptance of East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine is a mistake that repeatedly occurs."

"If we agree on this, then we should accept the partition," according to Dr. Majali, who said the status of East and West Jerusalem will come under discussion

during the final status negotiations.

These, he said, are political territories for which negotiations will be held, except for the holy places. He stated that during his visit to Ramallah last week and his meeting with PNA President Yasser Arafat, he felt that PNA officials prefer this expression.

Mr. Badran, however, reiterated the need to drop it from the reply. When asked if Jordan's policy regarding Jerusalem since 1967 has been wrong, he replied that "we used to refer to a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital until two years ago, when we added 'in Jerusalem'."

Mr. Badran said delineating borders was not his

"prerogative," adding that the whole issue should be left to the PNA to negotiate in accordance with international legitimacy.

Jordan's role is to provide advice to the PNA, he said.

Senator Mohammad Affash Adwan stressed the need to maintain the phrase because of its political significance and connotations, while Senator Kamel Ajlouni supported Mr. Badran's argument, and called for deleting the phrase "in Jerusalem."

Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani said the selection of the phrase "in Jerusalem" is in line with the change in the geographical concept of

the word, adding that East, West, and holy Jerusalem have been agreed upon.

Senator Abdul Karim Kabariti suggested that the phrase "in Arab Jerusalem" be maintained and stressed the need to separate the Jordanian role in Jerusalem and the issue under discussion. He stated that the phrase implies an inappropriate indication of the Jordanian role in the holy city and warned against misinterpreting it to mean abandoning parts of Jerusalem.

The House elected former prime minister and Senator Kabariti as first deputy speaker, Thouqan Hindawi as second speaker, and Senators Leila Shara' and Raja'i Dajani as assistants to the speaker.

Student arrested for murder

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN (J.T.) — Police Friday announced the arrest of a 19-year-old university student, who reportedly confessed to murdering his 21-year-old friend in the Amman National Park Wednesday, according to official sources.

Ra'ed Ibrahim's body was found dumped in the Amman National Park, with several stab wounds to his neck and heart, according to the coroners who examined the body.

The victim's car was found wrecked Thursday in Jabal Al Zuhour in Amman by authorities with blood traces inside it.

Mr. Ibrahim and his assailant, Abdullah Sa'ad, were on a picnic in the park, southwest of Amman, when Mr. Sa'ad stabbed the victim to death and took the money he had on him, according to the sources.

Mr. Sa'ad fled the crime scene, driving the car to Jabal Al Zuhour, where he parked the car. The car slid down a steep hill until it hit the right pavement of the street, where it stopped, the sources said.

Upon inspecting the car, police found traces of blood on the two front seats and immediately called the criminal police laboratory, who obtained samples, the source added.

Director of Amman Police Department Brigadier General Hisham Ensour said the suspect, who was arrested Thursday, confessed to killing Mr. Ibrahim for personal differences attributed to financial matters.

Over 2,000 public sector employees applied for early retirement — official

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A total of 2,300 civil servants have applied to take advantage of an early retirement plan launched by the government on Nov. 1 to trim an inflated bureaucracy and improve state performance, a senior Cabinet official said Friday.

Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour said the plan, valid for one month, was designed to encourage eligible employees to retire after serving the minimum number of years in public service, 20 for males and 15 for females.

"The goal of this plan is to reduce the governmental body and to lessen its annual growth," Dr. Ensour said.

The government also said the offer was intended to give employees a chance to work in the slightly better-paid private sector or seek jobs abroad to boost their income. The average government salary is JD150 per month.

The Council of Ministers has so far approved retirement requests from more than 800 workers who, after leaving their jobs, can collect pensions on a pay scale that is five annual increments higher than their current salary.

However the council has rejected more than 1,500 requests, mostly from the Ministry of Education staff, because it said the employees and their posts were still needed.

According to the plan, once an employee's retirement is accepted, his post is cancelled and the government does not hire any replacements.

In previous years, the government eliminated 6,000 new openings annually. This year, due to this plan and others, the government managed to eliminate 10,000 unneeded jobs, Dr.

Ensour said.

In another move to reduce the number of employees, the Council of Ministers Tuesday decided to cease hiring employees of the fourth category, those appointed by ministers, in all government bodies and ministries as of Nov. 2.

There have been charges that deputies and ministers have on many occasions resorted to offering new government jobs to associates to win favours from their areas and constituencies, thus bloating the already inflated civil service sector, which employs over one-third of the workforce.

Court overturns ruling convicting man of slander

Trial of accused Syrian murderer postponed

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation last week overturned a July 1997 State Security Court ruling sentencing a man to a three-year imprisonment term after being convicted of slandering His Majesty King Hussein.

The defendant, Mahmoud Khalid, was also sentenced on July 20 to six months imprisonment for belonging to the illegal party Hizb Al Tahrir (Liberation Party).

The prosecution had alleged that the defendant, who was a member of Hizb Al Tahrir since 1988, slandered the King during his interrogation by security forces in May 1997.

Mr. Khalid was quoted in the prosecution investiga-

tion sheet as saying: "I believe in my party's opinion and work to topple all current regimes in the Arab and Islamic Worlds, including the Jordanian regime, because they all do not rule by the Islamic dictate."

The court tribunal, which was presided over by Judge Bassam Newiran and included Judges Mohammad Raqad, Isma'el Omary, Nayef Ibrahim, and Abdul Fatah Awamleh, decided to acquit Mr. Khalid of the slander charges because it found "no direct statements by the defendant that slandered the King."

"The defendant was expressing his own political opinion about Arab and Islamic regimes in general during an investigation held to determine his political and religious beliefs and

activities," the court said.

However, the higher court rejected the defence attorney's argument that his client was not an active member in the illegal party, stating that the defendant willingly confessed in front of the state prosecution of belonging to the party.

Mr. Khalid will be released from prison after serving the six-month imprisonment term for belonging to the illegal party.

Hizb Al Tahrir is an outlawed fundamentalist group that does not recognise any existing Arab or Muslim regime. It calls for establishing a caliphate-style Islamic state.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Court Thursday postponed the trial of 35-year-old man accused of killing a Syrian

family in June 1997 because the prosecution witnesses failed to appear in court.

Fateh Jiasi reportedly confessed to authorities to murdering Jamal Abdo, 38, and his wife Manal Othman, 35, setting their apartment opposite the University of Jordan on fire, then choking and burying their two-and-a-half-year-old son at a farm near Madaba.

In his confession, Mr. Jiasi said he committed the crime to avenge an old financial dispute with the father's victim.

The court tribunal, presided over by Judge Mohammad Ajarmeh and including Judges Mifleh Mubeldin and Issa Hamdan, postponed the trial until Dec. 13 to hear the prosecution witnesses.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CHRISTMAS CHOIR

* Annual YWCA Christmas classical choir at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m. (until Saturday).

FILM

* Comedy "Schulz and Shulz" (pt.5) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 4:30 p.m.

LECTURE

* "Poetry in Jordan" by Mohammad Al Yousufi of Tunisia at the Royal Cultural Centre at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Plastic (abstract) art by Mohammad Qaddumi at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Dec. 7.

* Works by Ghada Dahdaleh at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 10.

* Paintings by Ammar Khammash at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 12.

* An exhibition of prints by Algerian artist Koraishi, and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Massoudi, inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

* Works by Khalid Khreis at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 10.

* "Journey Within" by Pakistani artist Gulgee and his son, sculptor Amin Gulgee, at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (Tel. 630128), until Dec. 15.

German bikers come to Jordan on 'unusual' holiday

By Omar Karny
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — There may be a few startled bedouins around Jordan in the following week asking themselves what "radfahren" is.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism, and arranged by German sports expert Jurgen Marten, three mountain bikers from the German cycling club "Eile Degerschlacht" will tour Jordan during the next seven days.

They will ride where no man has ridden before, across the rugged countryside of Jordan, in a bid to promote the sport here.

The tour started Friday in Amman and will pass through Ma'an, Karak, Dana Nature Reserve, Petra, and Wadi Rum

before reaching Aqaba on Dec. 10, where the delegation will turn and head back for Amman via Wadi Araba and the Dead Sea.

Covered by the German press, it will provide a unique look at a rarely seen side of Jordan and give the German public a taste of what, as Mr. Marten put it, "an individual, unusual holiday here could be like."

The riders will find their own way across the rough terrain, relying on maps provided by the Ministry of Tourism. The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature and the Jordan National Olympic Committee are also involved with organising the event, which is sponsored by McDonald's, Taybet Zaman, the Crown Hotel and the Dead Sea Hotel.

Jordan Times Fax
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Refugee multilateral group examines study documenting conditions in Kingdom's camps

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Palestinians living in refugee camps in the Kingdom, when compared to those outside the camps, "are the worst-off with regard to almost all aspects of what are considered relevant indicators of a good life," concluded a study on the "Living Conditions Among Palestinian Refugees and Displaced in Jordan."

The study, conducted by the Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science in collaboration with the Department of Statistics in Amman (DOS), UNICEF, and the International Development Research Centre in Ottawa, was presented at a two-day meeting of the multilateral Refugee Working Group (RWG) in Aqaba Wednesday.

Palestinian refugees and the displaced living outside refugee camps in Jordan live in conditions comparable to other households in the Kingdom, according to the study.

The report gave an in-

depth analysis of the living conditions of the 1948 refugees and the displaced from the West Bank as a consequence of the 1967 war.

"The purpose of this report is to display the living conditions of this population of Palestinian refugees and displaced and to compare their living conditions with the situation of non-refugees/displaced residents of Jordan," stated Jan Hanssen-Bauer of the Norwegian non-governmental organisation Fafo.

Compared to those who have settled outside camps, Palestinians living in camps have poor housing conditions, increased physical and mental health problems, higher unemployment, and lower income, the study stated.

According to this study, 13 per cent of Palestinian refugees or displaced live in UNRWA refugee camps and 87 per cent live in other parts of Jordan.

The study was based on the Jordan Living Conditions Survey (JLCS), the first survey in Jordan allow-

ing for a multi-dimensional analysis of the situation of Palestinian refugees and displaced.

Male unemployment in refugee camps in Jordan is rated at 25 per cent, in contrast to 16 per cent for the rest of the Kingdom, according to the study. As for household income, it was found that 27 per cent of camp households earn an annual income below JD900.

The survey also indicated that camp refugees and the displaced fared better than others living in Jordan in terms of infrastructure, including clean water, electricity, garbage disposal, and child health.

The study explained that infrastructure development is given priority in camps, and UNRWA provides most camp inhabitants with education and health services.

The study traced the bad living conditions in the camp to the fact that those who initially settled in these camps were uneducated people from rural areas, with low incomes. In contrast, the educated refugees

and displaced coming from urban areas settled in other parts of the Kingdom.

Living conditions among the large majority of Palestinian refugees and displaced in Jordan do not differ greatly from the rest of the Jordanian population. The study noted that the Jordanian government's policy in easing refugee integration into Jordanian society and UNRWA's support, were the main reasons for this.

According to Andrew Robinson, Special Coordinator/Middle East Peace Process for the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, this meeting showed that "the differences are not all that great between refugees living in camps, refugees not living in camps, and other Jordanians."

Mr. Robinson told the Jordan Times that this was a good opportunity to study the living conditions of the refugee population in Jordan and draw conclusions on how to improve their living conditions.

U.S.-EU standoff over climate goes on

KYOTO, Japan (R) — The United States and the European Union, two of the biggest players in the global warming debate, were still locked in a damaging standoff Friday over how best to cut emissions of greenhouse gases.

Five days into a Dec. 1-10 global conference on climate change in the ancient Japanese capital of Kyoto, neither the United States, the world's biggest carbon dioxide polluter, nor the EU, which has proposed the most ambitious cuts of any rich country group, had given ground.

Time was running out for negotiations before ministers from 160 nations, including U.S. Vice President Al Gore, gather Monday in Kyoto for the final push for a landmark agreement.

Diplomatic arm-wrestling, characterised by huffing and puffing over sub-paragraphs in heavy legal texts, have bogged down negotiations leaving some people fearing any agreement might be simply a paper tiger.

For veteran officials, hardened by years of international talks on how to curb emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, the last few days have come as no sur-

prise. "I don't think that anyone has given up ground but actually, I didn't expect that to happen during the first week," EU lead negotiator Jorgen Henningsen told Reuters television.

"But I think that we have got a better understanding of where the main players would be ready to give in and where they have their absolute essential priorities," he said.

The Kyoto talks are intended to force developed countries to cut emissions of greenhouse gases which will cause climate change in the form of more fierce, frequent storms, regional flooding, droughts and melting of polar ice caps.

To date the European Union has pledged a 15 per cent cut on 1990 emissions of three greenhouse gases by the year 2010, dividing the burden between its 15 states in a so-called "bubble" plan.

The approach drew flak from other rich countries Thursday which said the bloc should pay for the greater flexibility with deeper emissions cuts than countries such as Japan, the United States, Canada and Australia.

"There are some ambiguities about the legal position and the equity issue

and we have asked the EU to cooperate with us in solving these problems," Japanese Environment Ambassador Toshiaki Tanabe told Reuters Friday. Mr. Tanabe said the EU's reaction to critics of its bubble was no surprise, but then again, neither were Japan's tactics.

"It's quite normal that the EU countries work out their own strategies to secure as much for them as possible, that's what we are doing," he said.

"Everybody knows we are aiming at the same objective, to have a legally binding deal in Kyoto," he said.

While officials continued their trawl through the minutiae of a final deal on cuts, lobbyists from all sides of the debate employed ever more elaborate tactics to grab the attention of delegates and the media.

Environment groups acted out plays, erected junk dinosaurs and blockaded Kyoto fuel stations to get their messages across, while oil companies returned "scorched earth" awards to environmentalists and pumped out reports predicting employment meltdown if there were an agreement on severe emissions cuts.



Environmentalists wearing masks representing U.S. President Bill Clinton and Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar pose in front of a banner reading 'Clinton: Stop CO2' in front of Madrid's U.S. embassy. The protest was organised by Greenpeace to denounce the U.S. policies at the global conference on climate change (Reuters photo)

N. Zealand opens fierce debate among developing countries

KYOTO, Japan (AFP) — New Zealand Friday provoked a furious reaction from poor nations by calling on them to accept binding commitments to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

The proposal backed a long-standing United States demand for commitments from developing countries — a request that has been flatly rejected by the poor nations at the 10-day United Nations conference here.

The talks here are aimed at imposing legally-binding cuts on developed countries' output of gases blamed for trapping the earth's heat and threatening catastrophic global warming.

But New Zealand's lead official Darryl Dunn told the conference once developed nations had made their commitment, developing countries would have to shoulder some of the burden.

"We are well aware that our comment and proposal here will excite debate," he told the conference.

"We doubt that anyone will be entirely happy with it, and we fully expect that there will be those who will condemn it out of hand," he conceded.

The proposal won the immediate backing of the U.S. and a guarded welcome from the European Union (EU) but swift condemnation from the Group of 77 nations and China.

Mark Mwandosya, spokesman for the developing nations and China, slammed the proposal and later told AFP he would consider such a deal — but only in 2030.

"I think it is shifting responsibility," he said, charging that developed nations were "trying to find a way out in order to continue to emit to protect lifestyles."

Speaker after speaker from the developing world attacked the New Zealand proposal, refusing to even entertain it and decrying the developed world's failure to tackle its own obligations.

Zimbabwe said it would "not even consider" the proposal, Ghana said it had the "potential to derail the delicate ongoing negotiations." Honduras described it as "obstructionist" and Syria "totally rejected" it.

New Zealand proposed nations outside the developed world that were able to do so should implement "binding quantified emission limitations" from 2015.

"In order to do this there must have been a prior agreement on what these quantified emission limitation commitments will be," added Mr. Dunn, stressing that rich nations wanted assurances for the future.

"Those assurances will therefore be required well before 2014," he said. "In fact, they will be required as soon as possible."

Bill Hare, Greenpeace International's climate policy director, said he was "very concerned" that the New Zealand proposal could "derail these negotiations."

The U.S., which has been fighting an uphill battle to extract commitments from developing nations, supported the proposal, saying "all parties have a responsibility" in the talks.

The EU's leading official Pierre Gramegna gave a guarded welcome, saying the proposal had started the ball rolling and hinting poor countries might consider it once richer nations were closer to a target.

Mr. Dunn said the proposal called for limits on the growth of greenhouse gas emissions from developing countries rather than the cuts being negotiated in the industrialised world.

"We fully acknowledge that we are asking parties to start consideration of an issue that can only be resolved once an agreement on a protocol has been reached," he told delegates.

"We believe that it is essential that we start now, to give our ministers and heads of state or government something on which to build a full and final agreement."

Ministers are set to arrive over the weekend to make a decision on a Kyoto protocol, which is due to be signed Wednesday.

Aboriginal land row pushes Australia to early elections

SYDNEY (AFP) — A parliamentary dissolution and early elections for Australia looked all but inevitable after the defection of a key Senate vote Friday wrecked the government's chances of pushing through revised Aboriginal land laws.

Independent Senator Brian Harradine, who holds the balance of power in the upper house, made a last-minute U-turn and voted for an opposition amendment, delivering yet another blow to Prime Minister John Howard's hopes of saving his native title bill.

Mr. Harradine's vote had already knocked out key elements of Mr. Howard's 10-point plan, including a deadline clause on lodging native title claims, then voted with the opposition Labour Party to give special rights over developments on pastoral leases.

The Liberal-National coalition government bill had sought to allow states and territories to refuse Aborigines the right to negotiate on pastoral leases and on reserve land if it was subject to future development, such as mining.

National Party Senate leader Ron Boswell said Friday that so little was left of the native title bill that a double dissolution election was inevitable, adding: "I don't see any alternative."

The bill, bitterly opposed by Aborigines on one side and pastoralists and mining companies on the other,

would largely reverse rights which the High Court ruled in its so-called Wik decision Aborigines were entitled to.

Mr. Boswell's remarks came amid speculation that the government plans to take the first constitutional step towards a double dissolution election by formally rejecting Senate amendments in the House of Representatives.

Prime Minister Howard refused Friday to back down on his threat to call a double dissolution poll over the issue, but said he would wait to see the final shape of the legislation before responding to the senate amendments.

Under the deadlock provisions of the Australian constitution, a bill rejected by the Senate can be presented again within three months and a second rejection creates the trigger for calling an election after which the bill would go to a joint sitting of parliament.

Mr. Howard said the defeat of almost all provisions on the right to negotiate amounted to a Senate rejection of the High Court's Wik ruling that the rights of pastoralists prevailed over native title holders if the rights collided.

"What the Labour Party and the Democrats have done in the name of defending the Wik decision have in fact made it impossible for the parliament, unless they change their mind, to implement the Wik decision," he said.

"We want certainty, the Labour Party is determined to prevent it."

Mr. Howard has argued that race would cease to be the dominant issue once an election was called and that more traditional issues such as economic management would take over.

But Mr. Boswell said it would be impossible to avoid.

"We won't try and raise the race issue but it will be there, it'll be implied, I'm sure that everyone, no matter what side of politics will try to avoid it, but when you have a lot of new candidates running around, it'll blow somewhere."

Mr. Harradine said at first Friday that he was convinced by Special Minister of State Nick Minchin's argument that the native title bill subject to the Racial Discrimination Act would create widespread uncertainty and invite endless litigation.

But after a quick lunch break and a conversation with deputy opposition leader Gareth Evans, he withdrew his support for the government and apologised to Mr. Minchin for his last minute change of mind.

Indian parties put out election stalls ahead of mid-term poll

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Indian political parties set out their election stalls Friday as the country's poll panel started the counting down for the world's largest democratic exercise to be conducted early next year.

The three main political blocs, the United Front coalition, the Congress 1 and the Hindu nationalists, ended two weeks of turmoil by blaming each other for prompting the polls and vowed to come to power.

Indian President K.R. Narayanan dissolved parliament Thursday after Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's seven-month-old minority United Front government resigned after losing Congress backing.

The 14-party Front, which filled the power vacuum following the last elections, said it would campaign together in the polls, expected in February, for the first time.

"We will contest the elections through mutually accepted arrangements," coalition spokesman Jaipal Reddy said without elaborating.

He said the Front would use "national unity" as its slogan.

Meanwhile Congress, in decline after dominating Indian politics for almost half a century and voted out of power in the previous polls 18 months ago, said it would campaign on the promise of stable government.

"Stability had been our plank and will remain so," said Santosh Mohan Dev, Congress chief whip in parliament.

He added Congress had now dropped its demand which led to the toppling of the Front — its call for the expulsion of a coalition party accused in a report of links with Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas blamed for the 1991 killing of Congress former premier Rajiv Gandhi.

"The ... issue is now gone," Mr. Dev said.

The Front earlier accused Congress of trying to exploit the emotion surrounding Gandhi's assassination to take power itself.

India's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party, was Friday looking to forge new alliances to

broaden its appeal in a bid to come to power.

The BJP, which overtook its rival the Congress as the largest party following the 1996 polls but was still more than 100 seats short of a majority, confirmed it would try to woo Muslim voters away from Congress.

Party President Lal Krishna Advani said Thursday 120 million Indian Muslims had been treated as a "vote bank" by the Congress for 50 years but should now "give a chance" to the BJP.

He argued the BJP, whose support has traditionally been restricted to the north and west, was not anti-Muslim but was opposed to factionalism.

BJP spokesman Yaswanth Singh said: "This separation of the Muslim community from the mainstream of Indian society and politics will end and must end."

India's Election Commission, meanwhile, kicked off its preparations Friday for the mid-term polls — involving 600 million voters, 900,000 poll stations, 4.5 million officials and costing over \$200 million.

Election Commissioner G.V.G. Krishnamurthy ordered political parties not to field candidates with criminal records and said the hopefuls would have to sign testimonies saying they do not have a criminal past.

"Some 1,500 of the 13,952 contestants in the last elections had been convicted of murder, rape, robbery and kidnapping ... many are in jail still," Mr. Krishnamurthy said.

Under current Indian law, a person sentenced to more than two years in prison cannot fight elections. But, in case of appeal, the accused can contest — even from a jail cell.

He said the panel had invited the main parties for talks later this month on the conduct of polls, adding that election dates would be unveiled after the revised voters' list was published on Jan. 5.

The 1996 elections led to a three-way split of the 543-seat Lower House of Parliament, between the United Front (177 seats), Congress (140) and the BJP (162).

Philippine Supreme Court allows Imelda Marcos to seek medical care in U.S.

MANILA (AFP) — The Philippine Supreme Court issued an order Friday allowing former first lady Imelda Marcos to travel to the United States to seek medical care for an eye ailment.

Court officials said the order included several conditions including a 30-day limit to her time overseas, a requirement that she present a medical certificate from her doctor and that she report to the Philippine consulate soon after arriving in the United States.

Radio reports said the permission to go abroad was granted after representatives of Imelda Marcos, government lawyers and a special anti-graft body reached an agreement on the conditions.

The reports said that Mrs. Marcos, widow of deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos, would have to file a cash bond as well.

Imelda Marcos filed the petition with the Supreme Court to go abroad to seek medical care after the government issued an order, barring her from overseas travel.

His family were forced to flee overseas after a popular revolt toppled them from power in 1986. The Marcos widow was allowed to return to the country in 1991 after her husband died in 1989.

She was sentenced to a jail term of at least 18 years and up to 24 years in 1993 for graft and still faces numerous charges of having looted state coffers during her husband's rule.

Mrs. Marcos, who since the sentencing has been elected to Congress, remains free while her case is on appeal. However the government barred her from leaving the country while the case is pending.

Mrs. Marcos has been asking to go abroad to have her eye condition cared for, saying she could go blind if she does not receive treatment in Boston.

In October, she was hospitalised for high blood pressure but there was no mention whether this condition would also be treated abroad.

Mrs. Marcos was quoted as saying she hoped to leave the country before Christmas day.

Gore refuses to concede making mistakes in campaign fundraising

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Vice President Al Gore, in an interview published Friday, refused to concede he made mistakes in raising campaign funds and said he was not distracted by all the furor.

Mr. Gore said persistent public scrutiny of his appearance last year at a Buddhist temple in California, of his fund-raising solicitations from the White House and of statements he made in his defence was unfair.

"A snapshot does not have as much accuracy as a moving picture. Perspective is very important in politics," Mr. Gore told the New York Times, alluding to what he said were the political successes of President Bill Clinton's administration this year.

Mr. Gore's interview, which the daily said he had refused for months to do, followed Tuesday's decision by Attorney General Janet Reno not to recommend the appointment of a special counsel to investigate fundraising activities by Mr. Gore and Mr. Clinton.

There had been questions over whether they violated U.S. law by seeking political donations in telephone calls they placed from the White House. But Ms. Reno said no special investigation was warranted.

Mr. Gore depicted the continuing fundraising

controversy in partisan terms, suggesting that "the Republican Party is bound and determined to prevent change" in campaign financing as Americans are demanding.

Regarding Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Louis Freeh's disagreement with Ms. Reno on the appointment of a special counsel, Mr. Gore said he found Mr. Freeh's comments "perfectly proper," but added: "This was Attorney General Reno's decision."

In a separate interview with the Times, Mr. Clinton said Mr. Freeh's objections would not undercut Ms. Reno's credibility.

"She did what she had to do based on her reading of the law. And everybody knows that she is an independent-minded person," Mr. Clinton said of Ms. Reno.

Mr. Gore said he was not distracted by the fundraising furor and while he refused to respond to questions about whether he made mistakes in his fundraising activities, he admitted the past year had been rather difficult.

"This has been a great learning experience, really and truly. I think you learn more from adversity than you do from success ... I think this past year really has been a great year for the country."

Heavy snow, ice trap hundreds on Spain's roads

MADRID (R) — Heavy snowfall and a sharp drop in temperatures caused havoc on roads in the northern half of Spain Friday, officials said.

Hundreds of drivers were stranded overnight on roads in central and northern Spain, and helicopters were airlifting emergency food and blankets to them.

The Civil Protection Guard asked the army to help those in cars blocked by the early snowfall and sheets of ice, which were preventing traffic from circulating ahead of a three-day weekend.

But some drivers complained that help was

slow to arrive. "It's been really cold, there's been no helicopters, no civil guard, no food, no blankets and no information. I'd like to know what's going on," Alberto Guerrero, a lorry driver trapped overnight in eastern-central Spain, told state radio.

The Red Cross evacuated 100 people from a bus stuck just south of Madrid, according to a local news agency. They were hospitalised with symptoms of frostbite.

Snow was forecast to continue in the northern regions of Cantabria and Catalonia.

Rebels kill 21 in western Uganda

KAMPALA (AFP) — Ugandan rebels killed 21 people and abducted dozens of others during an attack in the western Kabonle district earlier this week, military sources said Friday.

Eleven fighters of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) raided areas around the market at Kyarusozo late Tuesday and used axes, hoes and machetes to hack peasants to death.

The victims were mainly people who moved to the area recently to be near River Aswa, whose water they use to brew a potent gin known as Waragi.

The rebels herded the people together, forced them to lie down and then butchered them.

The ADF launched an attack in the same area in October, killing 14. The local population then helped the army to track down the rebels and kill four of them and seize several guns.

This week's attack appeared to be a revenge raid on the villagers for cooperating with government troops.

Soldiers have been deployed to the area to persecute the rebels and prevent further attacks.

Meanwhile, the independent Monitor newspaper claimed that 3,000 people were left homeless following Tuesday's raid, swelling the ranks of displaced people in western Uganda to 100,000.

The ADF, a group of disparate rebel bands mainly drawn from remnants of the Muslim fundamentalist sect known as Tabliq and other fighters, have been fighting along the Uganda-Democratic Republic of Congo border since November last year.

They claim to be fighting to overthrow the government of President Yoweri Museveni, who, they say, is a foreigner of Rwandan ancestry.

Defiant Winnie damaged by crime probe

WINNERSBURG (AFP) — Nelson Mandela's defiant walk away from a shocking, nine-day trial probe carrying the stain of unresolved murder charges and accusations, which he vowed to detail her political

actions. Madiba, the 76-year-old, emerged defiant after a hearing of 200 minutes, a far cry from the 10-hour trial of his political

actions. The commission is looking to press criminal charges against her, a bid by the public, controversially, to win the rule of law.

The truth panel is exposing apartheid-era abuses, which ended in 1994. The panel is also looking at the role of the police, the military and the judiciary.

The Madiba-Mandela trial, which opened in the state of South Africa, is a landmark. It is the first time a former president has been tried for human rights crimes.

He was charged with leading a campaign of violence against the government, which included the killing of a police officer and the kidnapping of a judge.

Some 1,500 of the 13,952 contestants in the last elections had been convicted of murder, rape, robbery and kidnapping ... many are in jail still," Mr. Krishnamurthy said.

Under current Indian law, a person sentenced to more than two years in prison cannot fight elections. But, in case of appeal, the accused can contest — even from a jail cell.

He said the panel had invited the main parties for talks later this month on the conduct of polls, adding that election dates would be unveiled after the revised voters' list was published on Jan. 5.

The 1996 elections led to a three-way split of the 543-seat Lower House of Parliament, between the United Front (177 seats), Congress (140) and the BJP (162).

Philippine Supreme Court allows Imelda Marcos to seek medical care in U.S.

MANILA (AFP) — The Philippine Supreme Court issued an order Friday allowing former first lady Imelda Marcos to travel to the United States to seek medical care for an eye ailment.

Court officials said the order included several conditions including a 30-day limit to her time overseas, a requirement that she present a medical certificate from her doctor and that she report to the Philippine consulate soon after arriving in the United States.

Radio reports said the permission to go abroad was granted after representatives of Imelda Marcos, government lawyers and a special anti-graft body reached an agreement on the conditions.

The reports said that Mrs. Marcos, widow of deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos, would have to file a cash bond as well.

Imelda Marcos filed the petition with the Supreme Court to go abroad to seek medical care after the government issued an order, barring her from overseas travel.

Ferdinand Marcos and

Defiant Winnie politically damaged by shocking crime probe

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — President Nelson Mandela's ex-wife walked away from a shocking, nine-day criminal probe carrying the burden of unresolved murder and abuse accusations, which threaten to derail her political ambitions.

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, 63, emerged defiant Thursday from a hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that linked her to a string of murders, torture, kidnapping and assault charges.

While the commission is not seeking to press criminal charges against her, a bid by the populist, controversial African National Congress (ANC) activist to win the ruling party's deputy presidency in December is on the ropes, observers said.

The truth panel is exposing politically-motivated abuses committed by all sides of the apartheid era, which ended in the country's historic 1994 democratic poll.

The Madikizela-Mandela hearing opened a floodgate of publicity into still-unresolved allegations that she ordered, or participated in at least 18 serious human rights crimes, including eight brutal killings of activists in the late 1980s.

While many of her chief accusers — former ardent youth supporters in her notorious Mandela United Football Club — contradicted themselves on the stand, a mountain of negative evidence against Winnie emerged nevertheless.

Jerry Richardson, the convicted killer of child activist Stompie Seipei, testified that Winnie looked on as he bru-

tally assaulted the 14-year-old, and then she ordered his death, which Mr. Richardson carried out with a pair of garden shears.

Another key witness, Katiza Cebekhulu, said he saw Madikizela-Mandela personally stab Seipei to death behind her house in the sprawling black township of Soweto.

And the father of one of Madikizela-Mandela's alleged victims, her former youthful courier Lolo Sono, said he last saw the boy in a beaten, bruised condition with Madikizela-Mandela.

Ms. Winnie said she dropped Sono off near Mr. Richardson's home, and "never saw him again ... (and) didn't see any reason to investigate."

She angrily denied as "judicious" and "ridiculous" the string of other charges against her, accusing the press of conspiring with apartheid security police agents in a smear campaign.

The hearing displayed a growing antagonism towards the once-revered Madikizela-Mandela, who was the most visible and vocal anti-apartheid campaigner in the 1980s, from leaders in her own ANC.

Ms. Winnie publicly clashed with three senior ANC members, including Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi, who criticised her for losing control of her followers in the Football Club, whom several witnesses labelled "a gang of thugs."

"My political detractors have used means both fair and foul in attacking me," Madikizela-Mandela said.

Historic landmine ban treaty signed by 121 nations

OTTAWA (R) — A historic treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines worldwide became reality Thursday when 121 nations signed the accord.

"We've come to this conclusion with unexpected and heartening speed," Canada's Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy said at the end of a three-day conference to sign the treaty and begin a global effort to demine old battlefields from Angola to Cambodia.

It was a diplomatic triumph for Mr. Axworthy, who with Prime Minister Jean Chrétien marshalled support from around the world into a treaty in just 14 months — an unusually short time in traditional arms diplomacy.

But the big military powers — the United States, Russia, China — and most Middle Eastern nations refused to sign this week, insisting that some need for landmines remained.

An estimated 60 million to 100 million mines infest 69 countries. The weapons kill or maim more than 25,000 people every year — equivalent to a victim every 22 minutes, often striking women and children, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The treaty also marked the success of a public campaign by Britain's late Princess Diana, which focused world attention on the human toll taken by landmines.

It was the culmination of a coalition of popular figures, governments and non-governmental groups such as the Red Cross and American Jody Williams and her international campaign to ban landmines, which won this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

The number of countries that signed the treaty — more than twice the number that originally backed the idea in October 1996 — surprised the organisers, although some signatories were tiny states such as Vanuatu and San Marino.

Canadian officials said 125 countries asked to sign during the past two days, but a few did not come with the proper signing authority from their governments.

They will likely sign the treaty at the United Nations in New York next week.

The treaty commits countries not to make, use, stockpile or transfer mines, and also commits those with mines in the ground to remove them within 10 years if possible, with international assistance if needed.

"This is just a beginning," Mr. Axworthy said, seeking to build on the momentum to turn to demining and helping those landmine victims who have lost their legs or arms.

"We've got lots of work to do," Mr. Axworthy said the treaty could be ratified by the minimum 40 countries well within a year. "Once we have it ratified, it becomes international law," he said.

Noting that landmines have been a feature of armed conflict since the U.S. civil war (1861-65) and the Crimean war (1853-56), Ms. Williams hailed the treaty as "amazing and truly historic." The example set in bringing 121 countries together in the landmines treaty could be applied to other humanitarian issues, such as prohibiting the use of child soldiers, Ms. Williams said.

Mr. Axworthy said that in 36 hours the conference saw pledges of \$500 million.

They included \$87 million by the United States (to rise by \$20 million after a year), \$70 million by the European Union, \$24 million by Norway, \$16 million by Japan, \$14 million by Canada and

\$11 million by Germany.

Mr. Axworthy had told donors that demining was not just a humanitarian issue but a development problem, saying agricultural production could rise by one-third in Angola and Cambodia and double in Afghanistan if cropland was cleared of landmines.

Ms. Williams warned that money pledged to demine the afflicted regions must be used effectively to reach the estimated 10,000 demining experts and personnel working in the field rather than be squandered on new technologies that may prove useless. "Go and stand with them in the minefields of Afghanistan and northern Iraq so you know what they need," she said.

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Richard Branson's Global Challenger team Alex Richie (left) and Per Lindstrand (right) pose for pictures in front of their inflated balloon prior to take off in the midday sun Jan. 7 1997 (Reuter photo)

British billionaire gets ready for new balloon record bid

RABAT (AFP) — British billionaire Richard Branson has arrived in Morocco to prepare for a record-breaking trip around the world by balloon, the country's MAP news agency reported Friday.

The ever-smiling head of Virgin Airlines, who arrived in Marrakesh late Thursday with one of his teammates for the voyage, Per Lindstrand, said he hoped the weather would allow them to take off "in the next few days."

A master of self-publicity, Mr. Branson has billed the record-breaking bid — his third attempt after the last two ended in near-disasters — as the last great aviation adventure.

He is said to have practised parachute jumps "to

handle any situation" this time around.

If successful, the feat aboard the \$5 million Virgin Global Challenger, a helium and hot-air balloon, is expected to take around 18 days.

Some 100 tonnes of equipment and a dozen people whom Mr. Branson flew into Marrakesh last week have already begun readying the craft.

The third team-member, Rory McCarty, was expected to join the other two shortly.

But the skies won't be theirs alone, and this race against the clock has an added urgency: four other teams, including one sponsored by the U.S. space agency NASA, are also preparing to try to break the record.

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Unity of purpose

THE DEBATE in the Senate Thursday on the establishment of a Palestinian state with its capital as "Jerusalem" or "in Jerusalem" can be viewed as a semantic game that would neither add to nor subtract from the issue at hand. Since the Arab position including that of the Palestinians is to establish the capital of a Palestinian state in East Jerusalem, it makes no difference whether the capital is "Jerusalem" or "in Jerusalem." While it has been only healthy and democratic for the newly-appointed Senate to enter into such a debate, it must be equally clear that the outcome of their discussions cannot possibly determine the final outcome of the negotiations over the Holy City.

In this context, it has to be stated that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is no longer seeking full control over all the Holy City and has been concentrating its strategy and campaign on establishing a permanent political foothold in East Jerusalem which is after all "in Jerusalem." We should not try to second guess the PNA on what it should aim for in Jerusalem. Having said that, it would be extremely useful for us to unite behind a common platform whose aim is to put the Israeli body politic on the spot and hopefully put the peace process back on track, with or without Benjamin Netanyahu and his extremely right-wing government.

As His Majesty the King pointed out to the prime minister, in his letter on Thursday, what is crucially required is to lend support to the strangled Palestinians in every form. While the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks are still at a standstill, there are signs that Washington is poised to flex its muscles against Netanyahu. In fact there have lately been significant reports emanating from Washington to the effect that President Bill Clinton plans to announce a change in his administration's official policy on the Middle East. That change, according to a CNN report, will include support for a viable Palestinian entity in the West Bank, whose eastern border would be along the Jordan River and which would have free access to its Arab neighbours. The report also said that the Clinton administration had issued an ultimatum of sorts to Israel, demanding it take significant steps towards stopping construction in Jewish settlements and transferring territory to the Palestinians by the end of the year. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, on the other hand, is scheduled to meet with both Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Paris and Geneva this week. All eyes then should be focused on these encounters to see whether something will emerge from them. The time has not come yet to discuss whether the Palestinian capital should be Jerusalem or in Jerusalem, especially since news headlines tell us almost everyday that Netanyahu is hell bent on opting for Jerusalem, and in fact everything else, over peace.

Jordan can and probably will pronounce its view on the final status issues, including Jerusalem, because evidently the outcome of the negotiations will affect us directly. But this requires from us the unity of purpose rather than division on details, important as they may turn out to be.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Saleh Qallab said Netanyahu and his governing Likud Party must have realised that the Oslo accord constituted a threat to the Zionists' aims in the Palestinian lands and thus have been intent on destroying them. Jordan, more than any other Arab country is directly affected by the developments in Palestine and, in case Netanyahu succeeds in ruining the Oslo accords, a grave danger will hang over not only the Palestinians but the Kingdom as well, according to the writer. He said Jordan has to do all it can to help the Palestinian leadership regain the Palestinian homeland and rights because any adverse events that harm these rights are bound to adversely affect Jordan and its people. Jordan should be even more keen on and seek the implementation of the Oslo accord, should foil all of Netanyahu's plots and conspiracies and must seek the support of the world community and that of the Arab Nation to achieve this end, he added. He warned that wrong step at this crucial stage, and any retreat from the path of the peace based on justice would have far-reaching consequences on the whole area.

Al Ra'i's Tareq Masarweh refuted rumours in the past weeks that Gulf states opposed any U.S. military strike on Iraq. The huge armada of ships and war planes and the thousands of troops deployed in the Gulf and on land in the Gulf area, provide the clearest evidence that Gulf states welcome the military aggression on Iraq and are financing the preparations for the war. The writer said that neither the Arab masses nor the world community at large believe that the massing of military forces are designed to force Saddam Hussein to implement U.N. resolutions. The massing of forces are clearly intended to ruin Iraq, starve its people and humiliate the Arabs, said the writer. Anybody urging Iraq to implement the U.N. resolutions is supporting aggression because the Iraqis have already complied with all requirements so as to deny the hostile forces the excuse of launching an aggression, noted the writer. The U.S. is searching for an excuse to launch an aggression on Iraq by claiming that Baghdad does not allow the inspection teams to search Saddam's palaces where he allegedly hides chemical weapons, he pointed out. He said no one in his right senses believes that the president of Iraq sleeps in a warehouse full of dangerous weapons.

Jordanian Perspective

To hear an eyewitness tell it

NOW THAT the U.N. Security Council renewed but refused to double the amount of the Iraqi food deal to include the badly required medical needs, we still wonder what sort of a human conscience could tolerate this new manifestation of genocide? Reports from Baghdad confirm earlier data published by Rick McDowell of UNICEF last month, that 27.5 per cent of Iraq's 3 million children risk acute malnutrition. More children have died of starvation and disease "since 1991 than the combined toll of atomic bombs on Japan or ethnic cleansing in Serbia," he says. The number of Iraqi children who died in one year, that is 1995, reached 567,000 according to a Voice in the Wilderness team who visited Iraq on a fact-finding tour.

It is surprising to see how the slaughter of innocent Muslim children does not generate the same reaction that was triggered when white Slav school boys were massacred, could it be another form of radicalism?

The Jordanian delegation which visited Baghdad came back few days ago speaking of the brutal, nearly genocidal war that the sanctions declared on a defenceless population. Melhem Tell, secretary-general of the Constitutional Front Party confirms official U.N. reports that over 1.5 million Iraqis, mainly the elderly and the young, have died since 1990. Applying that ratio to the American population, that would mean 12 million Americans. That poses the question, had it been the same case, would the world community tolerate such a carnage with a similar form of indifference?

No matter what public relation gimmicks are used now to justify the collective death of Iraqis, the whole world should not repeat the same apathy it showed when millions were sent to oven concentration camps and gas chambers years ago in Europe. A few weeks ago the White House "apologised"

for having made a "terrible mistake" for the slaughter of millions of Vietnamese following the Gulf of Tonkin congressional resolution years ago. We Arabs do not want another "apology" for a "terrible mistake" resulting from a similar resolution 20 years from now. The families of those Iraqi millions dead cannot forget that easily what was inflicted on them and who caused their suffering, sacrifices and humiliation.

An American writer George Cappacio, published in the Baltimore Sun on Nov. 23, 1997 his report as an eyewitness to what seven years of sanctions have done:

Cappacio said: "When you picture Iraq, what do you see? Visions of Saddam Hussein? Hidden containers of anthrax and nerve gas? Scud missiles on the alert? Having visited Iraq last spring, this is what I see: Dignified Muslim women begging on Baghdad Street corners; young boys hawking cigarettes and kerosene to help support their families; a father running with his child into a hospital emergency room because there are so few functioning ambulances; a middle aged man with diabetes standing by a hospital entrance and pleading with me for insulin.

Inside the hospitals, I see blood and urine stained mattresses; broken air-conditioners and light fixtures; dimly lighted paediatric wards; mothers tending their children day and night; and hundreds of children waiting for medicine that never comes. This is what several years of sanctions has done to this once prosperous country.

When I went to Iraq I broke the law. The United States does not want American citizens going there. And for good reason. Our government doesn't want us to see the devastation our policy has caused.

Our policy of sanctions against Iraq has claimed the lives of more than one million Iraqis — mostly

children. I visited hospitals in Baghdad and Basra. I met Iraqi women and children. They are sick and they are dying. They do not have enough food or medicine. They do not have hope. They are without these things because the United States has decreed they can be sacrificed in the name of a vendetta against Saddam Hussein.

In Iraq, I saw numerous little boys and girls with signs of severe malnutrition — distended bellies, glossy eyes, discoloured hair and profound weakness. Thanks to sanctions, the doctors, in too many cases, can do nothing but provide supportive care while these children wither away in hospitals that are falling apart.

What could I have said to these dying children? Should I have said what the American media are now telling us that the suffering of the Iraqi people is due to one man and his intransigence in the face of international opposition? That whatever the price, the United States must stop this person from manufacturing weapons of mass destruction?

The United States and the United Nations are the ones wielding the weapons of mass destruction. These weapons are the sanctions against Iraq.

I tried to tell an American official what it was like to cradle an Iraqi child in my arms, to caress his hair and brow, and to know this child's quiet pain and suffering are the fruits of U.S. policy. The official responded he had a job to do, to clarify U.S. policy, not justify it, he said.

Over and over, the people I met asked me, "Why is your government doing this to us? When will it end?"

It will end when our government stops punishing the people of a country for the policies of its leader. It will end when we reach out to ordinary Iraqi people with fellowship and compassion. It will end when we help them rebuild their country, rather than sending them aircraft carriers and cruise missiles."

LETTERS

Work towards tangible progress

To the Editor:

CHANGES ARE taking place in just about every arena in the world, everyday, and that includes the status of women.

The pathetic case of the majority of women in our society is that they are mere victims of age-old suppression, self-denial and dehumanisation: victims of so much wrong perpetuated by the very same men who, ironically and ludicrously, claim that they do it to help and protect these helpless beings. Another outrageous pretext, "that many men have a honour: if ever there was a misnomer, it is the use of this beautiful word to justify some of the most barbaric and medieval practices. Namely, the so-called "crimes of honour," which have nothing to do with honour and all to do with crime. A heinous and despicable crime, which is carried out in our society, practically, with impunity. The weird thing is that our judicial system tolerates and rationalises it, and the obsessed and psychotic murderer of his wife, sister or daughter gets off with a little slap on the wrist if any. Much needs to be done and changed to rectify the

situation. Direction of change has to come from the top and trickle down through our legislative, judicial and educational systems. Justice should be accorded forcefully and equally to all men and women regardless of any cultural, religious or social bias in society. Justice should, with its claimed impartiality, transcend all that may impede it and prevail. Definitely it is a tall order, but not an impossible one. The efforts spearheaded by Her Majesty Queen Noor and HRH Princess Basma and others of their calibre and ability, to exert influence to energise Jordanian women and guide them through the maze of social and cultural obstacles, are highly valuable and helpful. But much more of where that came from is needed for any tangible progress to be achieved. Education from grade school and throughout has to start enforcing women's place in society in a much more positive way, as whole partners to men in rights, opportunities and responsibilities, at home, schools, work and in the political arena.

Walid N. Masayrah
Amman

M. KAHIL



Writers target the new parliament with suggestions for amending laws

REVIEWED BY
ELIA NASRALLAH

THE LOCAL dailies last week discussed the tasks of the 13th Parliament, domestic affairs, the situation in Iraq and the Arab-Israeli problem.

Writing in Al Arab Al Yawm, Riyad Hroub attempted to draw the attention of the 13th Parliament to what he saw as the numerous and sensitive issues requiring immediate attention and reforms. He said amendments to the investment, elections and public freedoms laws are needed because the existing laws obstruct the path of real democracy. The 13th Parliament should work quickly on amending the Investment Law because a great deal of economic and social issues hinge on this legislation, the Press and Publications Law must either be amended or scrapped altogether, and the Elections Law ought to be tackled and a modern law introduced, the writer demanded. He said the Senate and the Lower House both bear a serious responsibility towards enabling Jordan enter the 21st century enjoying social, economic and political security and stability.

Mohammad Ulayyan, a writer for Al Ra'i said that His Majesty King Hussein's Speech from the Throne set the stage for the work of the 13th Parliament in the coming stage of political, economic and social life in Jordan. Stressing that Parliament should give priority above all matters to domestic affairs, the writer said the country is in need of steps designed to further enhance national unity. The public demands a national health security plan, solutions to the unemployment problem and poverty in addition stronger Jordanian relations with Arab states and a follow up on the peace process to ensure comprehensive peace, Ulayyan said. In short, Parliament has a duty to carry out the King's directives in conjunction and close cooperation with the executive authority, said the writer.

Fahed Faneek of Al Ra'i criticised the

Ministry of Finance for failing to settle financial issues connected with several government departments largely by defaulting these departments' dues. The Ministry of Finance has long delayed paying electricity, fuel and water as well as medical bills forcing other organisations to stop providing services to them, he said. For instance, said Dr. Faneek, the Water Authority and the refinery have stopped supplying water and fuel to some government departments because they are heavily indebted and have failed to settle their dues. Saying that the ministry is not short of cash to pay these departments' dues, Dr. Faneek added that the ministry perhaps requires a supplement to the 1997 budget granting it permission to release funds to cover the debts of these departments. He said the various government departments must be able to function properly to safe-

guard public interest.

Al Dustour's Mohammad Daoud said the government plan to lay off civil servants who have completed their minimum number of years of service or its offer of incentives to retire can in no way help restructure the weak and inefficient public administration system. Daoud said dispensing of the service of a thousand or two thousand employees who constitute only a tiny portion of the government employees can hardly address the situation. In certain departments one can see a multitude of employees moving around with little work to do while in others one can easily see that there is a shortage of employees to handle the accumulating work, he noted. The government should look into the possibility of re-distributing its employees, placing the right persons in the right positions, meeting any shortage in public services and can retrain the employees to do a better job, he demanded. The writer also called on the

government to encourage and finance income-generating projects in the rural regions to prevent urban migration and to encourage the work force to take up trades and manual labour.

Discussing Iraq, Hosni Ayyesh of Al Ra'i blamed France, China and Russia for not adopting a strong stand in the face of the U.S. threats against Iraq. He said these nations seem to have given preference to their own national and trade interests and lucrative trade deals with the U.S. or Kuwait over humanitarian issues and preferred to remain silent or to back the U.S. in its unjust treatment of Iraq. The writer attacked Britain for its encouragement to the U.S. to wage yet another aggression on the Iraqi people saying that London was instrumental in fabricating lies about Iraq so as to pave the ground for a U.S. military strike against Baghdad. The writer said that

The Arab leaders have only offered Iraq lip service, with their leaders expressing concern for the people of Iraq, but failing to provide any meaningful action to give the Iraqis the help they need to deal with their present and continuing plight.

Oreib Rintawi, a writer for Al Dustour, said Israel is presently taking extra precautionary measures against possible suicide attacks by desperate Palestinians marking 10 years since the launching of the intifada. Naturally the Palestinian people are driven to despair by Netanyahu's practices, by Israel's settlement programmes and by the continuing siege and occupation, he said. Rintawi said that any suicide attack will give Netanyahu justification to go ahead with his plans to scrap the Oslo accord and to persuade the world to accept his own views and support his inhumane practices in the occupied Arab lands. Netanyahu should not be given the excuse to act in this manner and no matter how desperate the Palestinians are, wisdom should prevail. He warned against any rash moves that could further aggravate the situation.

Jihad Momani, a writer for Al Dustour, said it was natural to see the Palestine National Authority reject Netanyahu's offer of a tiny portion of the occupied Palestinian West Bank as a final settlement. The Oslo accord, he said, gives the Palestinians the right to most of the occupied territory in addition to the Gaza Strip, but Netanyahu is disregarding these accords under the excuse that he requires to create security zones for Israel, hence his offer which deprives the Palestinians of most of their lands and the right to an independent state. The writer said that, by demanding that Israel occupy the whole strip of land separating Jordan from the West Bank, Netanyahu is trying to deprive the Palestinians and the Jordanians of fusing any form of confederation or unity in the future. He said with this idea Netanyahu is providing evidence that Israel does not trust Jordan and cannot depend on the Kingdom to have common borders with the Palestinians.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

guard public interest.

Al Dustour's Mohammad Daoud said the government plan to lay off civil servants who have completed their minimum number of years of service or its offer of incentives to retire can in no way help restructure the weak and inefficient public administration system. Daoud said dispensing of the service of a thousand or two thousand employees who constitute only a tiny portion of the government employees can hardly address the situation. In certain departments one can see a multitude of employees moving around with little work to do while in others one can easily see that there is a shortage of employees to handle the accumulating work, he noted. The government should look into the possibility of re-distributing its employees, placing the right persons in the right positions, meeting any shortage in public services and can retrain the employees to do a better job, he demanded. The writer also called on the

a world community dominated by U.S.-Zionist influence can not be counted on to do justice to the Iraqi people or to save the Palestinians from Israeli oppression adding that the Arabs have only themselves to find a way to deal with problems in their region and end the suffering of the Iraqi and Palestinian people.

Suleiman Arar of Al Dustour said the U.S. threats against Iraq have encouraged Turkey to seek to occupy parts of northern Iraq under the pretext that it needs a security zone to protect itself from Kurdish rebel attacks. Turkey, encouraged by the U.S., is thus following in the footsteps of Israel which had created its own security zone inside Lebanese territory under the pretext of protecting itself from Lebanese resistance attacks on northern Israeli settlements, noted the writer. He said that the lack of any inter-Arab alliance to protect Arab interests has encouraged the U.S. and Turkey to pursue this policy against Iraq.

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The full text of His Majesty's letter to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali

(Continued from page 1)

land, thus contributing to the making of a bright present and, with God's help, a promising future for future generations to enjoy. The people spoke their word concerning the features of the coming phase, as responsible supervisors and full partners of the executive and judicial branches. By God's grace, all stand united on the firm ground of reality, cultivating all that is good, just and blessed; creating progress and prosperity, and proudly protecting all this with their dearest possessions — their lives and souls — from the powers of destruction, distortion, doubt and defamation, both within officialdom and without. This is the genuine belonging to a steadfast Jordan that is in the heart of its larger Arab Nation. Jordan has always adopted stances based on principle and has accomplished a great deal, being the fortress that it is, in the face of all trials and tribulations.

This is not surprising, for Jordan emanates from the tradition of the Great Arab Revolt and carries its banner and lofty ideals. The sacrifices made for Palestine by the Hashemite leaders of the Revolt, and the suffering they incurred as a result of honourable, responsible and courageous stands, in word as well as in deed, are thus far and until the Day of Judgement second to none. In doing so they had no ulterior motive, no hidden ambitions or quests and all they sought was the blessing of God and a clear conscience in anticipation of being judged favourably by future generations whom they worked for in earnest.

These are times characterised by uncertainty and confusion, even bordering on apprehension towards the quest for a just and comprehensive peace, in the wake of what appears to be a continuous attempt on the part of the Israeli prime minister to demolish the Palestinian-Israeli Oslo agreements, and change the very essence and facets of the peace process. His emphasis seems to be on the objective of implementing a far of peace in the Israeli society, instead of a serious drive towards attaining it as a means to remove all the causes of fear, and instilling the elements of mutual respect, confidence and collaboration between equals, in order to avert a certain coming catastrophe in its absence. Such a catastrophe, God forbid, will not spare the Israeli people nor the Arab people, foremost among them the Palestinians. Perhaps not even the world entire. Unfortunately, it is a small group of enemies of peace and life, advocates of death, despair and destruction in both Israel and the Arab World, that has led everyone towards this state of worry and anxiety.

It has become necessary for all of us, in light of these complex circumstances, to recall and identify clearly the bare facts of the well-known Jordanian position vis-a-vis the ongoing peace negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, in order to determine the obligations of the interim phase. In particular, Israel's obligation towards all the articles of the Declaration of Principles, the Cairo agreements and the Hebron agreement — which we had the honour to achieve and realise — and ensuring that Israeli withdrawal from all the areas agreed upon in the middle of next year.

Our position with regards to these negotiations is total support for our Palestinian brethren and their sole and legitimate leadership, which we have recognised and endorsed since the Rabat summit of 1974, in line with Palestinian and Arab wishes at the time and all that this entailed. This did not absolve us of the moral and national responsibility of addressing the Palestinian problem throughout, including the period of the Madrid peace conference, which enabled us to guide our Palestinian brethren to the negotiating table as an equal partner in the quest to make peace. This continued until we heard, along with the rest of the world, of the signing of the Oslo agreement. Following that, we turned to solving the question of Jordanian-Israeli peace in fulfilment of our duty towards the nation and generation to come.

Recently, we have noticed that some Israeli circles go far in presuming to speak in the name of Jordan by claiming that our security will be compromised in the event of the rise of a Palestinian state. This is used as a pretext to prevent an Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian land

on the Jordan River, by claiming that our security and theirs require such an unfair decision that deprives our brethren of their rights. These claims are baseless and they are categorically and unequivocally rejected. We felt that this needed to be clarified, not at the national level, for Jordanians are fully aware of our positions, but at the international level in order for the truth to be highlighted, lest it be distorted in any way, shape or form. Jordan does not fear anyone in this neighbourhood. For the Palestinians are our brethren, and Israel and Jordan are bound by a peace treaty. In any event, Jordan is quite capable of defending itself and bears the responsibility for that.

In so far as other fields are concerned, we have always called for the urgency of answering the question of where will final status be? The answer to this question concerns us strictly from the point of view of our national interest. Because we believe that the Palestinian-Israeli negotiating track has become, following the Oslo accords, independent of any external dominance or influence. At the end of the interim period, seven major issues will remain pending negotiations between the two sides, namely: Jerusalem, refugees, borders, settlements, water, security and sovereignty.

As for Jerusalem, we have declared our position more than once in that the land of Jerusalem occupied in 1967 is Arab land subject to terms of reference for peace, based on the land-for-peace formula. With regards to the Holy Places, the rights of all monotheistic religions — Islam, Christianity and Judaism — should be respected equally, and above the sovereign considerations of any state, to become the symbol of peace between all the People of the Book, the descendants of the Children of Abraham, peace be upon him. In view of the special status of the Islamic sites in Jerusalem, and because of Israel's unilateral and illegal decision to annex Jerusalem, we have included, in Article 9 of the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty, a clause that commits Israel to respect the present special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the Holy Shrines in

Jerusalem. Therefore, Jordan's historic role will be given priority during final status negotiations. This clause does not in anyway infringe upon the right of our brethren to establish their own state, with its capital in Jerusalem. Nor does it mean that Jordan wishes to impose on Islamic, Arab and Palestinian rights in the Holy City. Our role therefore is one of support for and assistance to our Palestinian brethren, just as much as we have a constructive role in achieving the peace of the believers, one that is honourable, just and lasting. God willing.

As for refugees, we must remember that Jordan is the largest host country of Palestinian refugees, most of whom hold the Jordanian citizenship, as honourable citizens, who share our rights and duties until their problem is solved with return and/or compensation. At that juncture, they will make their own free choice when we, along with the Arab negotiating parties, succeeded in securing their rights. On September 14, 1994, we signed the Jordanian-Israeli common agenda which included an article on bilateral negotiations on refugees residing in Jordan, and an article on multilateral negotiations on the rights of refugees and displaced persons until their problem is solved.

However, the Oslo accords and the Cairo agreement in early May 1994 led to the postponement of the refugee issue until final status. For this reason, the article dealing with refugees in the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty signed on October 26, 1994, stipulates that both signatories work to resolve the issue of refugees in accordance with international law, and relevant international resolutions in an agreed upon bilateral framework, in conjunction with, and at the same time as, the special negotiations on the permanent status pertaining to the territories referred to in the second paragraph of Article 3, that is the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. Based on that, we will resume multilateral negotiations on refugees in coordination with our Palestinian brethren over the rights of refugees.

As concerns displaced persons, we continue to exert every effort to resolve the issue. Dis-

placed persons are Jordanian brothers and sisters, who were forcibly displaced by occupation. Still, their right to return to their homes and properties in accordance with Security Council Resolution 237 and international law, has been attached to Article 12 of the Oslo accords. Out of respect for our brethren, we have acknowledged the wording they agreed to and have included the substance of it in paragraph 1A of Article 8 of the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty. This stipulates that the problems of displaced persons should be resolved through a quadripartite Jordanian-Palestinian-Egyptian-Israeli committee. We will work to revive the committee and support our Palestinian brethren and preserve the full right of displaced persons to choose to remain in Jordan or return to their domicile.

As for boundaries with the Palestinian lands, we have reiterated our absolute respect for them through our insistence that the treaty include paragraph 2 of Article 3, which states the following:

"The boundary as set out in Annex 1A is the permanent, secure and recognised international boundary between Jordan and Israel without prejudice to the status of any territories that came under Israeli military government control in 1967."

With that text we have postponed demarcating the borders with Palestinian lands until the end of negotiations pertaining to permanent status. Although the postponement of border demarcation until final status has obstructed the opportunities for movement of people and goods between Jordan and the Palestin-

ian land, and delayed the economic and trade opening with Jordan, we still shouldered our responsibilities towards our brethren in this regard with the open-mindedness that has always characterised our positions since the days when we kept the bridges open throughout the period of occupation since 1967. We welcome economic and trade interaction with the Palestinian brethren, and the creation of investment opportunities for them in Jordan, and through Jordan with the rest of the world. It is our wish that the government study expediently the possibility of erecting bridges on the river and consolidating them without harming their rights, and in full coordination with them.

As for water, we have succeeded on the bilateral level to regain our rights in that respect. We have entered with Israel into agreements that respect her rightful allocations of each party. These agreements call for advancing cooperation to prevent existing resources and to prevent their contamination, and for regional cooperation to increase future availability.

While regaining our water rights has thus far been partial, due to the need to build diversion dams and other projects that would guarantee our full rights, we have rejected and continue to reject the building of dams on sites that would compromise Arab rights. With regard to security, the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty is and is unambiguous. Article 4 and the ensuing paragraphs stipulate that each party will consolidate the security of the other, refrain from the threat of use of force or weapons, conventional,

non-conventional or of any other kind; and take necessary and effective measures to prevent acts or threats of belligerency, subversion or violence against the other party.

The article on international boundary ensured a permanent, secure and recognised borders. Emphasising these notions, Article 2 contained general principles in which both parties recognise and respect each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence, as well as respecting each other's right to live in peace, within secure and recognised boundaries, and that they respect and recognise the sovereignty and territorial integrity of every state in the region. While we believe in our ability to provide ourselves with comprehensive security and to respect the security of others, we insist on the principle of reciprocity and mutual respect in this regard.

As for the building of settlements, our position is clear. It is in violation of international law and contravenes the Palestinian-Israeli agreement which precludes each party from taking unilateral actions that prejudice the outcome of issues to be dealt with in the final status negotiations. Settlement building entails man dangers, foremost among which is harming Palestinians' right to land, water, agriculture and industry, forcing them to migrate. Therefore, we adhere to the sixth principle of Article 2 of the Peace Treaty, which stipulates that the involuntary movement of persons in such a way as to adversely prejudice the security of either party should not be permitted.

Our relations with Israel in the

other spheres of the Peace Treaty must be respected by both parties. Some articles have been implemented in the areas of air transport, commerce, agriculture, water, roads, combating smuggling, tourism, the environment, energy and civil aviation, as well as in Aqaba an Eilat. We have established political and diplomatic relations and exchanged ambassadors. Many of these projects have brought along mutual benefits. We believe that peace is not just signed papers, but rather a contract between generations for the building of a more promising and less threatening future. The overlapping of Jordanian and Palestinian interests in the interim period and final status negotiations require us to coordinate with our brethren and to use our utmost potentials to support their rights, while having full respect for the independence of their negotiating track, and for their absolute right to negotiate their own terms.

These are the premises that I and my government adopt, are guided by, and will do our utmost to fulfill. I have confidence that these orientations are those of the government, and that they represent its foreign, domestic and media policies. They are to remain clear and transparent to the Parliament and to the entire Jordanian people. They should emanate from the sole objective of serving their interest and that of their posterity, as well as the interest of achieving a just and comprehensive peace for coming generations and having the Palestinian people attain their full rights on their national soil.

May peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessing.

King renews confidence in Majali; letter signals imminent reshuffle

(Continued from page 1)

House was to praise the elections as "held in a free and fair atmosphere."

Mr. Badran said the omission was vital because five Lower House committees were looking into petitions, one of which challenged the legality of the whole 80-seat Chamber and others challenged the election victory of certain lawmakers.

The Lower House rejected on Wednesday a case filed by a man contesting the validity of the membership of all deputies.

Mr. Badran, however, failed to win support for his proposal.

According to the Constitution, both the Upper and Lower Houses have to reply to the King's Speech from the Throne.

Independents and opposition groups have criticised registration and voting procedures since the beginning of the three-week election campaign in October.

They have mainly rejected the official figure of registered voters (1.8 million), charging it was too high compared to the

total estimated population of 4.2 million people. They have also claimed that vote counting procedures were not transparent.

Some have even produced what they said were fake voting cards and forged power of attorney documents.

Dr. Majali's Cabinet, formed while Parliament was in recess, will use the King's Speech from the Throne as the policy platform on which it will seek deputies' confidence, according to the Constitution.

Several politicians have said

they expected Dr. Majali to include up to 12 new ministers, some of them lawmakers, in the much-expected reshuffle.

The King promised the inaugural session of Parliament that the government would submit three vital draft laws to regulate all aspects of political life in Jordan. He said the government will introduce laws on elections, professional associations and political parties to help modernise Jordan's political life, restarted after 1988 price riots.

King's letter clarified Jordan's position on Palestine — official

(Continued from page 1)

statements attributed to Israeli officials to the effect that Jordan was against the creation of a Palestinian state and that it supported Israel's decision to retain areas along the Jordan Valley for Jordanian security. Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh told the Jordan Times Friday.

According to Mr. Netanyahu's latest plans to redeploy the Israeli army from further West Bank areas, the Jordan Valley belt west of the river would not be handed over to the Palestinians because of "security concerns."

Mr. Khasawneh said that Jordan would reiterate its stand on final status issues "...so as to leave no room for any misinterpretation."

Ties between His Majesty the King and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat have been marred by sensitivities for years over who represents Palestinians, historic links to the West Bank and Jordan's role as custodian of Muslim holy shrines in Arab Jerusalem.

Hence, past efforts at co-ordinating stands on final status, especially Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees — many of which live in Jordan — have not always succeeded.

"Our position with regards to these negotiations [final status] is total support for our Palestinian brethren and their sole and legitimate leadership which we

have recognised and endorsed since the Rabat summit of 1974 in line with Arab wishes at the time and all it entailed," the King said in the letter to Dr. Majali.

"The overlapping of Jordanian and Palestinian interests in the interim period and final status negotiations require us to co-ordinate with our brethren and to use our utmost potential to support their rights, while having full respect for the independence of their negotiating track, and for their absolute right to negotiate their own rights," continued the King.

The letter also aimed to quell Palestinian fears that a state of their own would never see the light because of a perceived understanding that Jordan and Israel view it as a threat against their interests, a Jordanian official said.

He said His Majesty was infuriated by information received by the Kingdom that Mr. Netanyahu has been attempting to set both the Palestinians and the Egyptians against Jordan by playing on the supposed rivalry in mediation efforts linked to the peace process.

"The actions used by the Israeli premier are ploys to serve as evasive tactics to avoid the real issue," said the official. Mr. Netanyahu has increasingly voiced his preference for jumping to final status talks — a move the Palestinian National

Authority has rejected outright.

A report published in Thursday's issue of The Jerusalem Post said that U.S. President Bill Clinton will be pressuring Mr. Netanyahu to clarify his position on final status issues, and to move on with the implementation of the various accords with the Palestinians.

The report also said that Mr. Clinton would support the creation of a "viable Palestinian entity in the West Bank, whose Eastern border would be along the Jordan River and which would have free access to its Arab neighbours."

Mr. Netanyahu is currently on a European tour to sell his proposal of a limited Israeli withdrawal from approximately eight per cent of the West Bank.

A seasoned politician said Jordan has a two-pronged approach to final status talks: "First to ensure that the [P.L.O.-Israeli] Oslo accords are not abandoned since they serve as confidence building measures. And secondly, that the intention of creating a Palestinian state must be announced by Israel prior to embarking on final status talks, so that the end result is known to all before discussing the thorny issues."

He said successive Israeli governments, whether Labour or Likud, have "failed to understand the importance of the Palestinian cause on Jordanian-Israeli relations, and Arab-Israeli peace making in gener-

al."

"Amman's stand is that the Jewish state must recognise the centrality of the Palestinian issue to Jordan, and the importance of movement on the Palestinian-Israeli track," he stressed.

Relations between Jordan and the Jewish state soured after Israel's bungled assassination attempt on Khaled Misha'al, the head of the Hamas political office, in Amman late September.

Although diplomatic contacts remained intact, the botched attempt greatly angered the King, Israel's warmest peace partner.

His Majesty's renewed criticism of Mr. Netanyahu — twice in less than a week — evident in his letter to Dr. Majali and his Speech from the Throne at the opening session of Parliament — was seen as a clear indication that he is changing his approach towards the Israeli premier.

After Mr. Netanyahu's election in May 1996, the King was the only Arab leader to urge his sceptical partners to give him the benefit of the doubt. "His Majesty has come to the conclusion that the Israeli prime minister's strategy against peace has now become very clear," said one senior official. "The letter to Dr. Majali should serve as a clear message to Mr. Netanyahu."

The Saturday Crossword

PHYSICALLY SPEAKING

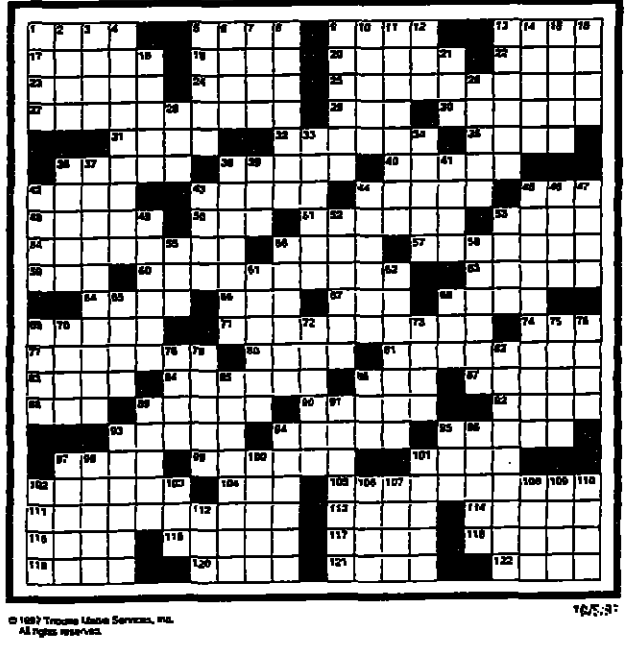
By Roger Coburn

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Edited by Herb Eitensson

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Diagramless, 19x19

By Frances Burton

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EU delegation helps identify key Jordanian sectors needing assistance

By Ghalla Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A European delegation left Jordan Friday after concluding talks aimed at defining ways of helping the country modernise its industry to meet the challenges posed by the recently signed Euro-Jordan association accord.

The two-day visit, which came ten days after signing the agreement in Brussels, was aimed at identifying key sectors in which the Union could extend its financial and technical assistance, head of the delegation of the European Commission in Jordan, Yves Gazzo told reporters on Thursday.

"We need to know what are the sectors from which we can expect a lot of value added. We will then design a proper scheme of how to use the money which will be available for 1999," Mr. Gazzo said.

After signing the agreement, Jordan is confronted with a challenge of raising its industry to international standards and leading market-oriented policies in order to maximise its benefits from the deal.

Peter Zangl, head of the delegation and director of South Mediterranean Near and Middle East Division at the European Commission, told reporters that the Union will continue to support Jordan in facing such challenges, stressing the importance of identifying potential sectors for development in order to utilise the European financial aid allocated to the year 1999 in the most efficient manner.

The agreement, which falls within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership called for by the Barcelona conference of November 1995, will provide the free access to EU markets and encourage direct European investment in the country.

Under the MEDA budget (1996-1999), the EU extended to Jordan a total of ECU 117 million (about \$128) in support of the country's economic reform programme and the private sector.

Jordan is meanwhile awaiting the allocation reserved for the country in the 1999 EU budget. The delegation did not mention a specific amount but said the amount will be clear early next year.

The delegation's two-day visit came one week after a seminar was held in Jordan on the Euro-Jordan association accord.

During the seminar participants from the private sector urged the EU to establish a business service centre in Jordan to provide the necessary diagnostic and consulting

services on organisation of local small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), quality, ISO certification, management, marketing, technology, training and development.

The delegation said the centre, to which ECU 7 (about \$ 7.7 million) are allocated, is expected to open early next year to cater to private Jordanian and European SMEs and help them find a partner in Jordan or Europe.

Participants at last week's seminar also called for the enhancement of export capabilities of Jordan's agricultural sector to take advantage of the export opportunities provided by the accord.

They also called for the development of the Jordanian vocational training capabilities and the exchange of human resource managers/trainers between enterprises.

IMF-bailout package to S. Korea is biggest in world history

SEOUL (AFP) — The IMF-led international bailout package for South Korea will exceed \$57 billion with new funds pledged by Belgium, Sweden and the Netherlands, Finance Minister Lim Chang Yuel said here Friday.

"The package is expected to exceed \$57 billion," Mr. Lim told a press conference.

He said the pledges from the three were on top of the \$22 billion already pledged by seven other countries, the IMF's \$21 billion, the World Bank's \$10 billion and the Asian Development Bank's \$4 billion.

The bailout is the biggest in world history, surpassing the 1995 Mexican peso rescue package.

Mr. Lim also revealed Seoul had accepted an IMF condition that insolvent financial units, including commercial banks, be sub-

ject to mergers and acquisitions or even liquidation.

The financial institutions affected also included merchant banks, securities houses and insurance companies, he said.

Seoul also agreed to lift all restrictions on foreigners buying short term financial instruments including commercial paper and certificates of deposit as well as corporate bonds.

To enhance the transparency of accounting large financial institutions will be subject to inspection by internationally-recognised auditing companies, Mr. Lim said.

The IMF-Seoul agreement also contains a provision that the government mop up surplus liquidity to keep the inflation rate curbed below five per cent in 1998, despite the pressure it will inevitably put on interest rates, he said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your best chance of finding whatever you're after is in the middle of the day. Tonight there's another complication. There's no need to head out early. Sleep late. Travel during the middle of the day and try to reach your destination before dark.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your schedule's packed! You want to go shopping, and there are parties to attend. Besides all that, you and your sweetheart want to take a trip somewhere. Get your best friends to help you edit your schedule and your chances of success improve greatly.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There are too many options and not enough information to make a good decision. Knowing how much money you have is a good start. Then, if you can get a Pisces to help you go shopping, you'll have the situation handled. Pisceans are the very best at picking out good gifts.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You and your true love need to get out of town this weekend. If you don't have a true love, no problem. Travel by yourself and you're more likely to find one. Work that needs to be done complicates matters. Use it to inspire you to move faster, and have it all.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You need to know how much money you have, and how much you can spend. There's a little work on your gift list. Some of the things are going to be pretty easy, but others are going to take more work. Share your talents with others and everyone benefits.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) You and your true love need to spend some quiet time together this weekend. You may have to go somewhere other than your own home. Everybody's busy making messes. Don't worry. It'll clean up in between everything else. Catch it when you can.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) Some of the things on your list can be delegated, but many can't. There are several things you promised to do for other people, and you don't want to drop those out. Someone who's depending on you won't be amused if you miss a connection.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) Schedule some private time this weekend. It's a challenge, but it's not impossible. It regenerates your soul, as well as your enthusiasm. The situation will become even more complicated tomorrow, so don't assume you can put it off until then. Do it now.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) An accident may prevent you from going out this morning. During the middle of the day you can travel, but get back in time for dinner. If you can manage to pull this off, you'll be successful. If not, you'll get irritable and cranky. Try to prevent that from happening.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Instead of simply going along with your friend's assessment, use your own judgement. Between the two of you, the best course of action becomes obvious. Finish errands early and spend the middle of the day doing something more relaxing. Read a book.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Looks like money coming in and money going out. Save as much as you spend. That means you'll have to shop for bargains. That's not your favourite thing to do, but today it could mean the difference between getting something you want or do without.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) An older person could surprise you this morning. Just take it in stride. Offer your partner some good advice in the afternoon. He or she doesn't realise how important you are to this relationship. You come up with some very good ideas. Make sure you get the credit, too.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

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A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE THE GRAND OPENING OF THE INTER-FIT HEALTH SPA

UNDER THE Patronage of His Excellency Mr. Akel Biltagi Minister of Tourism & Antiquities, Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan held a grand opening for the Inter-Fit Health Spa. Guests witnessed a glimpse into the future of staying fit in Jordan. Local and International guests of Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan have been awaiting the arrival of this exclusive Health Spa for members & Hotel guests.

Guests of The Inter-Fit Health Spa enjoy this unique and memorable fitness experience. The Inter-Fit Health Spa offers the latest state-of-the-art equipment, the finest in beauty treatments from facials to underwater treatment for members and non members (by appointment). The Inter-Fit Grape Vine Bar serves a wide range of tempting dishes without the guilt.

A cocktail reception was held & attended by hotel guests members of the diplomatic corps in Jordan. The opening is just a small glimpse of the many services to come at the Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan.



From Left Chief Elia Abu Al Hawa, Mr. Chawki Ayoub (G.M) H.E., Mr. Akel Biltagi, Ms. Rhonda Al Jamal (Reception Manager)



THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Book of maps
- Business days
- Beer ingredient
- Reliance
- Novelist Murdoch
- Spiny African plant
- Current craze
- Take on cargo
- Sit low
- Extending across
- Globet elements
- Bagel topper
- Concoct
- Perfect report card
- Heat to vaporization
- Pastoral poem
- Music collection, in brief
- Large art tome
- Banned insecticide
- Too sophisticated
- Opposing position
- Experience emotion
- Filed up
- Made palatable
- Proclamation
- Fill to capacity
- Carvey or delivery
- Questions
- More inadequate
- Pleased
- Look for
- Tasty idiot
- Ultimatum word
- Church seats
- Intuit

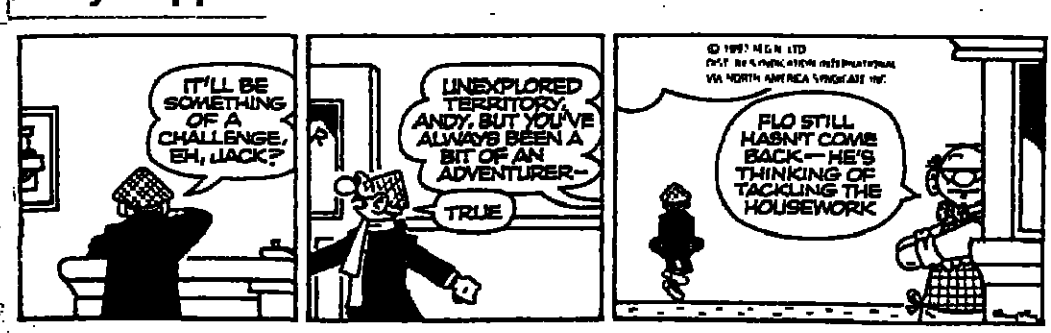
DOWN

- SS dispersers
- Star author
- Our moon
- Letter clarification words
- Batting posture
- Now We are Six' author
- Actress Sonia
- Assistance
- Compass dir.
- Singer Kathy
- Dramatist Edward
- Fertile soils
- Concise
- Tax grp.
- Flaky, layered rock
- Perchance
- Summon
- Alphabet openers
- Well-behaved
- Great Valley
- Mischievous spritz
- Italian novelist
- Calvin
- German film, "Boat"
- Hit on the head
- Overplay the TLC
- Wedge for stopping
- Chicago-based film critic
- Power, in brief
- Condemnation from the church
- Building front
- Risked sum
- Grown-ups
- Marsh grass
- Moe of potlitos
- Lolobrigida and others
- To one side
- Pieces of work
- Seldom seen
- Sherman
- Helmley sit-com
- Russian-born artist/designer
- Small scale
- Get the point

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt n' Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

Good job, but pick up the pace!

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here:

Yesterday's Jumble: CHANT BANAL PURVEY CAMPER
Answer: What the animals enjoyed watching - THE HUMAN RACE

Business
Sudden
Arab B
AFM tu

By Three Anyoub
and to the Jordan Times

AFM Bulletin
The weekly AFM bulletin
showed that the turnover
of the Jordanian market
reached 100.7 million, con-
sidered a record for the last
week. The increase was
due to a result of a "sudden"
increase in demand for the Arab
Bank shares, brokers said Friday.

REUTER
The E

Major Currencies

Currency	USD	1
US Dollar	1.0000	1
DE Mark	0.5612	1
GB Sterling	1.6572	2
CH Franc	0.6950	1
JP Yen	0.0077	1
CA Dollar	0.7030	1
IT Lira	0.0006	1
NL Guilder	0.4878	8
FR Franc	0.1676	0

Energy

Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	15.01	17.94
WTI	15.51	18.46
Bonny	15.01	17.94
Dubai	17.00	17.25
UL Gas	184.00	183.00

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	287.7	291.0
Silver (oz's)	5.4	5.6
Platinum (oz's)	381	383
Al (3 Months)	1574	1
Cu (3 Months)	1823	1
Zinc (3 Months)	1127	1
Lead (3 Months)	540	1
Ni (3 Months)	6020	6

Commodity

Commodity	Last
Coffee (lb's)	175.25
Cocoa (lb's)	1806
Sugar (lb's)	300.7
Wheat (lb's)	127
Soy (lb's)	24.47
Tea (lb's)	158
Barley (lb's)	0
Rice (lb's)	370

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'Sudden demand' for Arab Bank shares boost AFM turnover by 59%

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN—Turnover at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) registered a 59 per cent increase in the last week of the year as a result of a "sudden demand" for the Arab Bank shares, brokers said Friday.

The weekly AFM bulletin indicated that the turnover reached JD9.7 million, concluded through 2,050 contracts, compared with JD6.1 million a week ago.

Naser Al Amad, an AFM broker, said the increase was the outcome of a "sudden" demand for the Arab Bank shares, which reached 12,000 shares in three separate contracts. The bank's present share price is JD332.

Mr. Amad told the Jordan Times that the demand for the bank shares followed "recommendations" by the ING Barings and Union Bank of Switzerland to foreign portfolios.

"The recommendation suggested that buying shares of the Arab Bank and two other

firms in Lebanon and Egypt would be profitable," he emphasised.

The other two firms are Solidere, owned by Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, and the Commercial International Bank of Egypt, he said.

"Their recommendations are widely respected by American and European portfolios. Therefore they decided to buy here," Mr. Amad said.

He explained that selling of Arab Bank shares during last week AFM activities was mostly by Arab Gulf investors while the purchase was made by European and American portfolios.

More than 60 per cent of the Arab Bank capital is owned by non-Jordanian individuals, mostly Arab businessmen and governments.

The AFM bulletin indicated that almost half of the weekly turnover was due to the demand for the Arab Bank shares.

Another broker, Naim Nageeb, expected "weak demand" for the bank's shares in the financial market.

"The reserves of the commercial banks have been distributed among the shareholders and the subscription will be for shareholders. Therefore supply of banks' shares will exceed demand in the market," Mr. Nageeb said.

The bulletin showed that the daily turnover amounted to JD1.94 million compared with JD1.22 million in the previous week.

The general share price index reached 172.2 point compared with 171.30 point a week ago.

It added that banking sector won the lion's share of the weekly turnover with JD7.6 million, or 78.3 per cent of the total turnover, followed by industrial sector with JD1.2 million, or 12.4 per cent. Services sector with JD0.7 million and insurance sector with JD0.2 million.

The weekly bulletin said that among the 92 companies that changed hands at the AFM, 24 registered increase in their closing price, while 56 firms witnessed decrease in their prices and 12 companies showed no change.

South Korean banking system starts crumbling

SEOUL (AFP) — Cracks in South Korea's debt-burdened banking system deepened Friday despite the record IMF bailout and a dizzy rise in stock prices.

Coryo Securities and Investment Co. was declared bankrupt by creditors, becoming the first casualty of the crisis and the country's first such bankruptcy since 1963.

Eight other merchant-bank related securities companies were hanging on by their teeth, financial sources said.

The South Korean won also sank against the dollar, cutting into the euphoric buying spree on the exchange, which suspended trading in Coryo Securities.

Other bankers warned their coffers were bare and

the country's 22nd-largest conglomerate, Dongbu Group, said it was indefinitely shelving a \$1.6 billion chip project because of lack of funds.

Bank ratings agency, Thomson's Bankwatch, added its name to the list of watchdogs downgrading South Korea's sovereign risk, despite the bailout.

Thomson's cited the International Monetary Fund (IMF) mandated slowdown of the economy and "heightened" political and social risks given mass layoffs, presidential elections and South Korea's militant unions.

The composite stock price index closed seven per cent up at 434.12, while the won closed at a dismal 1,230 off a low of 1,250

after opening at 1,180.

In Washington, the IMF, which warned Tuesday that South Korea was "10 days away from economic collapse," approved a \$21 billion credit for Seoul.

It was the core of a rescue package that experts said could finally amount to \$60 billion, the biggest ever organised by the Fund.

But every cent of the 21 billion dollars is needed to repay the same amount in outstanding loans before the end of this month.

In its analysis of what went wrong in South Korea, the IMF said a legacy of government intervention led to "a highly leveraged corporate sector that lacks effective market discipline."

Since the start of the year,

it added, an unprecedented number of conglomerates, known as "chaebols," have gone bankrupt after investing excessively in the steel and automobile sectors.

Non-performing loans in a weakened financial sector rose to the equivalent of 7.5 per cent of GDP.

South Korea's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to expand by six per cent this year and by only 2.5 per cent in 1998, according to the IMF.

Only this week the 12th largest conglomerate, Hallya group, was saved from bankruptcy when banks agreed to roll over loans.

And on Thursday the central bank had to extend 1.8 trillion won (\$1.6 billion) to eight merchant banks to haul them back from the

brink.


A Coryo Securities official said commercial banks, because of their own problems, were turning a deaf ear to finance ministry pleas to help non-bank financial institutions.

Seoul newspapers, meanwhile, warned that massive cuts may be forthcoming in large state projects, and even in defence spending, but no details were given.

And the Chief Prosecutors' office said it was "exploring the possibility" of following Mexico's example in 1995 — by ferreting out those responsible for the financial crisis and punishing them.

The presidential Blue House urged the prosecution to drop the idea.

REUTERS									
The Business of Information									
Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7818	0.8034	1.4388	130.11	1.4225	1745.00	2.0084	5.9680
DE Mark	0.5612	-	0.3384	0.8076	73.00	0.7980	978.56	1.1268	3.4742
GB Sterling	1.6572	2.9605	-	2.3835	215.27	2.3574	2890.07	3.3263	9.8809
CH Franc	0.6960	1.2375	0.4191	-	80.40	0.9880	1211.47	139.51	4.1422
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3584	0.4633	1.1050	-	1.0925	134.00	154.18	4.5803
CA Dollar	0.7030	1.2388	0.4197	1.0007	1.09	-	1213.86	1.3963	4.4480
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0203	0.3455	0.0824	1342.82	0.8146	-	11.50	3.4162
NL Guilder	0.4973	88.89	0.3003	71.98	64.77	0.7082	888.88	-	2.9892
FR Franc	0.1676	0.2967	0.1011	24.1167	21.80	0.2384	33.65	33.6500	-
Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NG	FRF
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7505	0.3770	3.8410	0.3044	3.6728	1631.00	3.4045
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	0.2973	0.5325	5.4427	0.4239	5.1676	2162.43	4.8086
Saudi Riyal	0.2688	0.1888	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0811	0.98	408.21	0.9077
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8780	0.9483	-	8.65	0.8073	9.74	4081.01	9.0305
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1945	1.0301	1.0301	-	0.0836	1.01	420.48	0.9350
Kuwait Dinar	3.2857	2.3263	1.2330	1.2387	11.98	-	12.07	5030.39	0.9350
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212	0.1026	0.9913	0.0829	-	416.85	0.9289
Lebanese L1000	0.65	0.4624	2.4497	0.2482	2.3782	0.1988	2.9890	-	2.2237
Egyptian	0.2937	0.2080	1.1016	0.1107	1.0695	0.0884	1.0788	448.70	-
Energy									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NG	FRF
Brent	18.01	17.94	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WTI Texas	18.01	18.48	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bonny	18.01	17.94	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dubai	17.00	17.25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UL Gas	184.00	183.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NG	FRF
SA Riyal	0.2688	0.1888	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0811	0.98	408.21	0.9077
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212	0.1026	0.9913	0.0829	-	416.85	0.9289
KW Dinar	3.2857	2.3263	1.2330	1.2387	11.98	-	12.07	5030.39	0.9350
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.72813	1.60128	3.81971	345.233	-	-	-	-
CY Pound	1.9116	3.4072	1.1636	2.7613	248.796	-	-	-	-
Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Currency	Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	10 Year
USD	5.84	5.84	5.87	5.87	5.87	5.87	5.87	5.87	5.87
GBP	7.81	7.81	7.88	7.71	7.71	7.71	7.71	7.71	7.71
JPY	0.15	0.15	0.16	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27
DEM	3.90	3.72	3.91	3.91	4.03	4.03	4.03	4.03	4.03
FRF	3.45	3.58	3.73	3.85	3.97	3.97	3.97	3.97	3.97
CHF	1.88	1.62	1.72	1.68	1.85	1.85	1.85	1.85	1.85
ITL	6.10	6.00	5.88	5.43	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25
Energy									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NG	FRF
Coffee (c/b)	176.25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1606	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sugar (\$/ton)	300.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wheat (\$/ton)	127	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Soy (\$/b)	24.47	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tea (\$/kg)	168	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Barley (\$/b)	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rice (\$/ton)	370	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell	Buy
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GB Sterling	1.1912	1.1972	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE Mark	0.3996	0.4016	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CH Franc	0.4948	0.4973	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FR Franc	0.1194	0.12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
JP Yen	0.5487	0.5514	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NL Guilder	0.3564	0.3564	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT Lira	0.4077	0.4087	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET															
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SIDQISARI															
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179															
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (29/11/1997 - 03/12/1997)															
WEEKLY REPORT															
															
DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS		COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE PRICE	TURNOVER MARKET SHARES	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
HIGH	LOW														
333.000	325.000	ARAB BANK	15.3	1.20	49	18100	6041345	330.00	335.00	330.00	332.00	+2.00	333.776	-411	5
1.870	1.780	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	-	0.00	86	46510	88520	1.84	1.92	1.84	1.91	+0.05	1.903	-111	5
3.200	1.900	BANK OF JORDAN	5.9	0.00	59	26567	530176	1.92	2.15	1.88	1.88	-0.04	1.996	1.687	5
1.100	1.040	MID.EAST INV.BK.	68.3	0.00	7	2950	3068	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	-	1.040	-030	4
2.480	2.560	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	10.3	0.00	30	68600	157025	2.60	2.61	2.58	2.60	-	2.591	-520	5
5.150	5.040	THE HOUSING BK.	19.7	3.70	37	53603	281537	5.15	5.30	5.18	5.25	+0.10	5.254	-214	4
3.390	1.850	JOR.KUNAIT BANK	10.6	0.00	21	26887	52889	1.94	2.01	1.95	1.99	+0.05	1.967	-179	5
780	770	JOR.GULF BANK	4.4	5.46	46	77400	58652	77	77	74	74	-0.03	758	-387	5
4.190	4.050	ARAB JOR. INV.BK.	30.2	0.00	2	10050	42110	4.19	4.19	4.19	4.19	-	4.190	-067	1
5.910	2.900	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	15.0	3.25	209	100028	303438	2.97	3.09	2.94	2.95	-0.02	3.034	-549	5
1.200	1.170	UNION BK.SAV. INV.	161.3	0.00	13	55150	63410	1.17	1.15	1.12	1.15	-0.02	1.150	-313	3
3.880	3.450	JOR. INV. FID. BANK	24.1	0.00	2	450	3198	3.80	3.75	3.75	3.75	-0.05	3.751	-009	2
920	880	BEIT AL-KHOL (BEITMA)	5	17.05	4	1250	1103	90	89	88	88	-0.02	882	-063	2
3.730	3.370	ARAB BANKING CO.	10.1	0.00	7	1573	5887	3.57	3.75	3.75	3.75	+0.18	3.743	-016	2
BANKS SECTOR															
562 720618 7632466 INDEX NUMBER : 236.78 CHANGE : 0.644															
2.750	2.750	JORDAN INSURANCE	11.4	5.56	7	10079	27514	2.75	2.75	2.70	2.70	-0.05	2.730	-202	2
1.900	1.840	JOR.FRENCH INSUR.	5.4	7.81	7	8400	16577	1.87	2.01	1.90	1.92	+0.05	1.973	-382	2
2.100	2.100	HOLY LAND INSUR.	6.2	0.00	2	509	611	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.20	-0.05	1.900	-03	1
2.350	1.950	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.0	4.84	12	16717	31927	1.95	1.93	1.88	1.88	-0.07	1.909	-760	4
6.000	2.370	JORDAN GULF INSUR.	-	0.00	3	74000	2307	2.49	2.49	2.49	2.49	-0.12	2.490	2.667	1
6.000	6.000	ALKHSIP AL-ARABI	16.9	0.00	1	500	1575	6.00	3.15	3.15	3.15	-2.85	3.150	-075	1
INSURANCE SECTOR															
32 66205 152894 INDEX NUMBER : 115.83 CHANGE : 0.322															
1.970	1.860	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	9.4	5.15	58	105100	202086	1.90	1.94	1.91	1.94	+0.04	1.923	-701	5
2.500	2.400	ORIED ELECTRICITY	15.5	4.42	9	2350	572	2.49	2.75	2.52	2.60	-0.14	2.662	-072	3
2.500	2.400	SHIPPING LINE	14.0	0.00	11	400	960	2.50	2.50	2.40	2.40	-0.10	2.400	-114	1
1.190	1.130	NATL. PORTFOLIO	-	0.00	34	22225	24871	1.14	1.14	1.10	1.12	-0.02	1.119	-465	5
920	900	REAL ESTATE INV.	12.5	6.67	2	200	180	90	90	90	90	-	900	-004	1
5.200	5.000	JORDAN INTL.TRAD.	26.2	0.00	2	1100	567	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.1	-0.1	5.15	-032	2
8.000	8.190	ALRAI*	14.9	6.02	15	2874	23861	8.20	8.31	8.27	8.30	+0.10	8.302	-144	4
6.320	5.580	AD-DUSTOUR	29.1	3.59	11	3325	22812	6.32	6.97	6.64	6.97	+0.65	6.961	-188	2
1.240	1.240	MID. EAST HOTELS	15.8	0.00	15	9475	12085	1.30	1.30	1.25	1.25	-0.05	1.275	-226	3
3.750	3.480	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	9.8	0.00	34	24400	91868	3.74	3.77	3.72	3.76	+0.02	3.735	-243	5
950	740	JORDAN EXPAT. INV.	-	0.00	11	35308	29387	81	85	77	80	-0.01	832	-704	3
990	930	SARKA EDUCATION	-	0.00	14	22191	21302	97	96	96	96	-	960	-493	3
1.730	1.690	UNIFIED CO.	8.1	6.43	6	1350	2309	1.69	1.71	1.71	1.71	+0.02	1.710	-027	3
SERVICES SECTOR															
212 730290 438010 INDEX NUMBER : 106.72 CHANGE : 0.167															
1.050	1.050	ATTANQER	-	0.00	3	350	385	1.05	1.10	1.10	1.10	+0.05	1.100	-013	2
3.140	3.010	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.9	3.54	58	13310	41199	3.10	3.11	3.08	3.11	+0.01	3.095	-022	5
3.400	3.500	JOR.PHOSPHATE MINES	10.0	2.78	7	8065	28977	3.55	3.60	3.55	3.60	+0.05	3.593	-018	3
6.500	6.400	ARAB POTASH CO.	15.1	2.40	11	11550	74420	6.40	6.50	6.30	6.50	-0.10	6.443	-014	4
10.000	10.700	JOR. PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.2	8.43	24	5844	42551	11.00	11.00	10.52	10.58	-0.42	10.580	-410	1
5.670	5.670	JORDAN TANNING	7.3	5.04	3	282	1650	5.67	5.95	5.67	5.95	+0.28	5.951	-028	2
1.610	1.350	INDUSTRIAL COMM.AGR.	-	0.00	14	7200	10680	1.58	1.54	1.44	1.45	-0.13	1.472	-144	4
4.290	4.170	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	11.4	4.84	41	69152	288038	4.20	4.20	4.13	4.13	-0.07	4.165	-768	5
2.940	2.800	JORDAN DAIRY	9.5	8.70	2	107	301	2.80	2.81	2.81	2.81	-0.01	2.810	-006	1
1.440	1.180	JOR.PIPES MANFACT.	17.1	5.00	13	4137	5671	1.39	1.38	1.36	1.38	-0.01	1.371	-127	4
2.890	2.890	JOR.PAPER CARBON.	15.8	0.00	2	216	604	2.89	2.80	2.80	2.80	-0.09	2.796	-007	1
6.520	6.520	ARAB CHEM. DISTRIB.	20.0	4.60	1	200	1304	6.52	6.52	6.52	6.52	-	6.520	-030	1
1.400	1.130	RAFIA INDUSTRIES	-	0.00	4	5650	7369	1.34	1.34	1.30	1.30	-0.04	1.304	-565	2
2.430	2.380	ARAB ALUM. IND.	5.5	10.59	2	1750	4138	2.40	2.37	2.36	2.36	-0.04	2.365	-029	2
480	460	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	47	38950	17960	47	47	46	46	-0.01	461	-180	5
830	830	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	25.1	0.00	5	1250	1025	83	82	82	82	-0.01	820	-036	1
560	540	NATIONAL INDUS.	-	0.00	14	10850	5899	55	55	54	54	-0.01	544	-181	2
520	470	INTERVED. PETRO. CHEM.	-	0.00	40	19750	8048	47	47	42	43	-0.04	404	-494	5
600	580	JOR. ROYALWOD INDUS.	-	0.00	3	1250	718	58	58	57	57	-0.01	571	-043	3
1.900	1.850	NATL.CABLE WIRE.MFAC	28.2	0.00	25	11900	21297	1.85	1.83	1.75	1.76	-0.09	1.790	-238	3
640	590	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	-	0.00	86	37850	23723	62	62	61	61	-0.01	612	-841	5
1.310	1.260	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	16.0	5.60	10	1940	2438	1.31	1.27	1.25	1.25	-0.06	1.257	-039	4
1.200	930	UNIV. PETRO. INDUS.	405.4	0.00	81	12130	10834	93	93	89	89	-0.04	892	-2022	5
1.830	1.830	JOR. INDS. RESOURCES	8.2	12.70	33	21300	16664	1.79	1.79	1.73	1.73	-0.06	1.754	-421	3
1.530	1.510	NATL. CHLORINE	14.3	4.67	8	4300	6477	1.52	1.52	1.50	1.50	-0.02	1.502	-060	3
920	860	JOR. WEN CABLE CO.	16.3	0.00	29	24550	22053	90	90	89	89	-0.01	898	-307	5
1.490	1.400	EL-KAY READY WEAR	46.9	0.00	20	6374	8952	1.44	1.42	1.37	1.39	-0.05	1.389	-085	4
1.250	1.190	INTL. TOBACCO	6.7	0.00	19	11675	14277	1.23	1.23	1.22	1.22	-0.01	1.223	-117	5
1.090	1.030	UNION CH. & WES.	48.4	0.00	1	1000	1091	1.07	1.07	1.07	1.07	-	1.070	-027	3
760	750	JORDAN STEEL	33.5	6.76	29	33660	25262	76	76	74	74	-0.02	745	-114	4
640	570	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	67	91300	56373	63	63	60	62	-0.01	617	-415	5
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR															
671 567021 867131 INDEX NUMBER : 117.67 CHANGE : 0.522															
GRAND TOTAL															
1477 1584134 909481 INDEX NUMBER : 172.27 CHANGE : 0.574															
DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS		COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE PRICE	TURNOVER MARKET SHARES	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
HIGH	LOW														
350	310	CENTRAL GEN.STORAGE	-	0.00	1	1000	330	35	33	33	33	-0.02	330	-030	1
390	390	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9.6	0.00	87	200350	73506	38	37	36	36	-0.02	367	-6770	5
520	520	MACH.IMP.RENT.MAINT.	-	0.00	4	5000	2503	52	51	50	50	-0.02	501	-417	3
630	400	ARAB FIN.INVEST.	-	0.00	55	106500	45046	43	43	40	40	-0.03	423	-1065	5
760	730	UNION INV. SOF.	-	0.00	41	150665	34976	73	74	73	73	-	732	-685	5
1.160	1.160	SARKA FOR INVESTMENT	78.7	0.00	3	200	240	1.16	1.20	1.20	1.20	+0.04	1.200	-001	1
710	710	AL-DAMLATI 753	65.3	0.00	5	18340	8061	71	69	68	68	-0.03	640	-131	3
810	810	AL-SHAQJ INV.CO.	313.3	0.00	15	61752	34084	81	89	79	89	+0.08	816	-644	4
1.000	1.000	ARAB JOR.INVEST.CO.	-	0.00	13	79624	65292	81	82	82	82	-0.01	81	-885	1
1.340	1.050	CESTUMY INV. GROUP	-	0.00	1	75000	7500	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	1.000	-075	1
330	320	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	36.9	0.00	7	3250	5033	1.34	1.71	1.41	1.71	+0.37	1.549	-045	5
190	160	JOR. INDS. MACH-DEMCO	-	0.00	12	16200	2469	16	17	14	17	+0.01	154	-095	4
3500	3500	STEEL PIPES	28.4	2.86	1	6000	21000	350	350	350	350	-	3500	-100	1
350	330	NATL. TEXTILE	-	0.00	3	1750	560	32	32	32	32	-0.02	320	-070	1
390	370	MATKAL DISS & WHITF	-	0.00	1	700	76	38	38	38	38	-	380	-013	1

Prince Hassan to receive Kingdom's S. West Asian Games delegation

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan will Saturday meet the Kingdom's delegation to the Southwest Asian Games which returned home after taking part in the 12-nation event in Tehran, Iran Nov. 17-28.

Secretary-General of the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) Ismat Kurdi said the Crown Prince would also meet with presidents of the respective participating federations. He added that the JOC will present the Crown Prince with a blueprint of the Kingdom's preparations for hosting the 9th Pan-Arab Games in Amman.

Kurdi added that the final decision as to the holding of the Games in 1999 or 2001 would be announced before the end of the year and after a meeting of the Minister of Culture and Youth Qassem Abu Ein with officials of the Arab Sports Federation.

Jordanian athletes competed in eight events at the Tehran Games and gained 10 medals — half of which were won by the athletics team.

His Majesty King Hussein and Crown Prince Hassan had sent Jordan's delegation a cable of congratulations on their impressive results.

In ten days of competition, Jordan won two gold, four silver and four bronze medals.

Fakhruldin Fuad clinched a gold medal clearing the high jump bar at 2.10 metres although his personal best stands at 2.17.

The medal was Fuad's third gold of the year. He had won the gold at the Pan-Arab Games and the Arab Athletics Championship in Saudi Arabia in August.

Mohammad Abu Khadijeh earned the Kingdom's other gold medal when he won the final bout of the heavyweight boxing event.

Tareq Najjar won a silver medal in the discus setting a new personal best with a throw of 51.90 metres. His discus record stood at 51.53 metres which he set in Saudi Arabia earlier this year.

Najjar had earlier set a new Jordanian record in winning the shot put bronze medal with a throw of 15.80 metres.

Awwad Sreyes won two silver medals in the 10,000 metres and 5,000 metres.

Ayed Khawaldeh won another silver medal in the 54-kilogramme category of the weightlifting competition.

Khawaldeh, the only weightlifter representing Jordan, had become the only Jordanian to win three medals at July's Pan-Arab Games.

Khaldoun Abdul Hamid and Basel Hindawi won two bronze medals in the boxing 57 and 81 kilogrammes.

Jordan's Mousa Khalaf won a bronze medal in judo's 78-kilogramme category.

Jordan was eliminated from the fencing, wrestling, tennis and badminton events.

The impressive results in three sports — weightlifting, athletics and boxing — all of whom were also equally impressive in Beirut's Pan-Arab Games capped Jordan's participation in the Games which included 17 sports events.

Open to men's teams only, the Tehran Games had brought together athletes from Saudi Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Oman, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan and Iran.

Jordan's 37-member delegation comprised 19 athletes competing in 8 events: Athletics, boxing, fencing, badminton, tennis, wrestling, weightlifting and judo.

The games also included basketball, karate, table tennis, soccer, handball, taekwondo shooting and swimming.

The JOC sponsored excellent players by paying for medal-winners at July's Pan-Arab Games in order to increase the Kingdom's competitive chances. Eight of the 12 Pan-Arab medalists again earned medals for Jordan.

Many Jordanian federations stayed away from competition unable to cover air-fare. Those include equestrian, handball, basketball, volleyball, shooting and table tennis.

The Tehran Games were the second regional competition Jordan took part in this year. Jordanian athletes were impressive at the Pan-Arab Games gaining more gold medals in Beirut than in the past seven Pan-Arab Games altogether, and making it the best Jordanian participation since the event was first held in 1953.

The Kingdom took a total of 40 medals, including 10 gold, 8 silver and 22 bronze to finish fifth among the 19 participating countries.

9 athletes to represent Jordan in Women's Islamic Games

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan Friday confirmed its participation in the 2nd Women's Islamic Games which will be held in Tehran Dec. 13-21.

In a telephone interview with the Jordan Times, the Secretary-General of the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) Ismat Kurdi said that the Kingdom's delegation would take part in three sports events only.

"Nine athletes, three officials and a referee will take part in athletics, table tennis and badminton," Kurdi said, noting that Jordan's first participation in the event was "a symbolic one."

"Ms. Fayez Hashemi Rafsanjani, a member of the Iranian Parliament and the president of the Islamic Women's Affairs Council sent Jordan the invitation to take part. We feel that it is an important event for the Kingdom to be a part of."

Kurdi said that the equestrian federation had declined while the organisers had cancelled handball in which Jordan was slated to compete.

According to the JOC officials, the athletes named by their respective federations are top class athletes in their sports.

Amal Mutari won a bronze medal at July's Pan-Arab Games, while Alia Tuffaha is a veteran player of the table tennis national team.

The JOC official said that the number of participating countries had not been confirmed although reports said

twenty-six countries would be taking part in 13 sports events.

With all expenses to be covered by the hosts, four other federations had initially expressed interest to take part. Those include basketball, karate, gymnastics and handball.

The Games which will be held less than two weeks after the Iranian capital hosted the 1st Southwest Asian Games which were open to men's teams only.

Jordan took part in eight sports events and won ten medals at the Games (see separate story).

The Kingdom's delegation will include

• Head of delegation: Sana Bilbeisi

• Athletics:

Official: Ina'm Inabeh

Players: Haya Qutami

Hana Attiyeh

Amal Mutari

• Table tennis

Referee: Raghdia Zawaydeh

Players: Alia Tuffaha

Lina Majdalawi

Hadeel Awwad

• Badminton

Official: Siham Abdallah

Najwa Turk

Lina Rashdan

Karolin Shaker

1998 WORLD CUP GROUPS

Group A: Brazil, Scotland, Morocco, Norway.
Group B: Italy, Chile, Cameroon, Austria.
Group C: France, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Denmark.
Group D: Spain, Nigeria, Paraguay, Bulgaria.
Group E: Holland, Belgium, South Korea, Mexico.
Group F: Germany, USA, Yugoslavia, Iran.
Group G: Romania, Colombia, England, Tunisia.
Group H: Argentina, Japan, Jamaica, Croatia.

Minefield awaits world's football giants

World Cup odds

LONDON (AFP) — Leading English bookmaker William Hills betting on World Cup finals after draw was made in Marseille, France, on Thursday.

3/1 Brazil, 6/1 France, 7/1 England, Germany, Italy, 8/1 Holland, 12/1 Argentina, 16/1 Spain, 25/1 Croatia, Yugoslavia, 33/1 Nigeria, 40/1 Belgium, Romania, 50/1 Bulgaria, Colombia, Norway, 80/1 Paraguay, 100/1 Austria, Cameroon, Scotland, South Africa, 150/1 Chile, Mexico, 200/1 Morocco, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, USA, 250/1 Japan, Jamaica, Tunisia, 300/1 Iran.

Before the draw Brazilian coach Mario Zagallo feared a European plot to put his side under pressure straight away. It proved unfounded when Brazil found themselves grouped with Scotland, who have never got beyond the first round in the World Cup finals.

Norway, whose 4-2 win in Oslo in May was Brazil's only defeat since their 1994 World Cup triumph, will be keen to make amends for their disappointing showing in USA '94 when they scored only one goal in three matches.

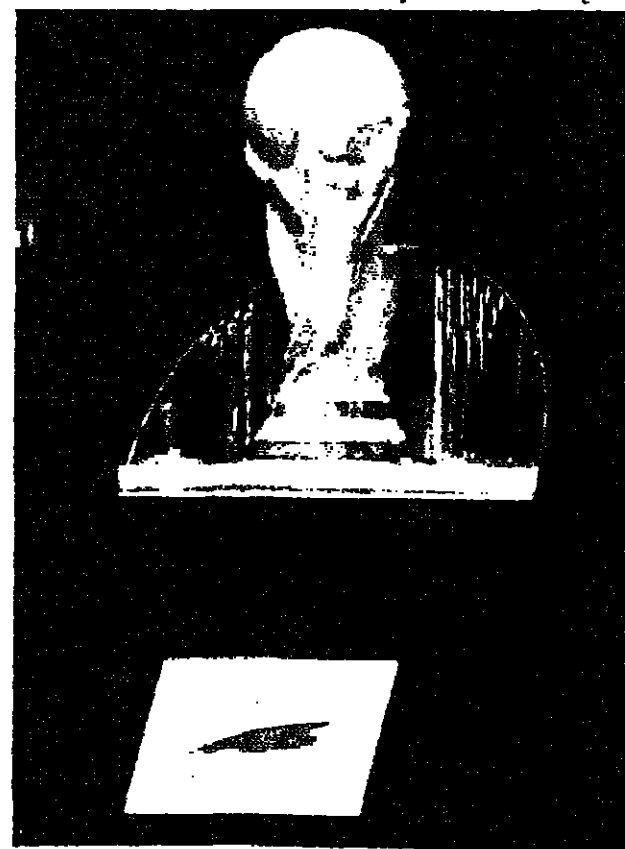
Italy, who qualified through the backdoor by beating Russia in a play-off and were fortunate to be seeded, drew Chile, led by \$20-million rated Marcello Salas, Cameroon and Austria in their group.

Italy coach Cesare Maldini said: "We've have to wait and see what happens on the pitch but I think it's a good draw. Maybe it's too early to judge our opponents."

"Austria performed very well in qualifying and we don't know much about Cameroon and Chile. We'll have to make sure we get out and watch all of them."

Holland drew old rivals Belgium, whom they beat twice in qualifying. South Korea and Mexico while European champions Germany were drawn against the United States, Yugoslavia and Iran.

Germany coach Berti Vogts attempted to hide the smile on his face after the



The World Cup trophy on display as the draw is made in front of an estimated 38,000 people (Reuters photo)



Brazilian coach Mario Zagallo (L) and Norwegian counterpart Egil Olsen enjoy themselves after the World Cup draw. Brazil and Norway are joined in Group A by Scotland and Morocco (Reuters photo)

Lyon on June 21. It is one match FIFA must have hoped to avoid. They will be dreading the

possibility that the bitter animosity between the two countries spills onto the playing field.

President of the Iranian football federation Darius Mostafavi was quick to play down any possible trouble between the two sides.

"I think we have a chance of beating the United States because they are definitely not better than us. I don't think our match with them will be very different to other games because the football world is different to that of the political one," he said.

Yugoslavia, who have come through a civil war on their way back into international football, lost 4-1 to eventual winners West Germany in their last finals in 1990.

Argentina, without Diego Maradona for the first time the 1978 finals, face three newcomers — Japan, Jamaica and Croatia.

And Japan, who with South Korea will host 2002, are confident they can at least move into the second round and set up a match with England.

Saburo Kawabuchi, vice president of the Japanese Football Association and

chairman of the Japanese J-League, said: "I think we are in a good group because we have played Croatia and Argentina before, even though they were rated higher."

"We can relax when we play against teams at higher levels. I think it is not impossible for us to chalk up one win and one draw and advance to the second round."

"Remember that in the Atlanta Olympics we beat Brazil whom we thought we could never beat once in 100 matches. So I think there is always the possibility of victory against any team."

South Korea got a good draw as they could expect lined up with Holland, Belgium and Mexico.

South Korea coach Cha Bum-Kun, who made his name as a player in the Bundesliga, was excited about his group.

"In the end it makes no difference who you get because if you want to progress you have to beat the best in the world. You can't whinge about it. There's no reason we shouldn't make the second round."

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GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMMAM HIRSH

ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AQ85 Q102 CA75 AQJ72

The bidding has proceeded: WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

2a Pass 2b Pass 2c Pass 2d Pass

What action do you take?

A - Not an easy decision. With such a tentative spade stopper, three no trump is not pretty, and you don't have a 4-4 heart fit. Your values might not stretch to an 11-trick contract in a minor. All in all, your best chance for a reasonable score seems to be to pass and convert the double to penalties.

Q. 2 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AKJ852 CA6 CB54 AAK

The bidding has proceeded: WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

1a Pass 1b Pass 1c Pass 1d Pass

What action do you take?

A - There is an old, but very wise, adage: "When the opponents open in your best suit, pass." Follow that advice, and you will select 100 or 200 for beating one spade. If you think you should bid some number of no trump, where do you expect to score tricks? The opponents are likely to run a lot of diamonds against you.

Q. 3 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AQJ9852 Q6 Q3 AK742

The bidding has proceeded: WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

12 Pass 13 Pass 14 Pass 15 Pass

What do you bid now?

A - You have the values for a jump to two no trump, but you can't make that bid without a true spade stopper. Neither can you jump raise diamonds with only three-card support. All you can do is bid one heart and see how the auction develops.

A - Those of us old-fashioned enough to play that a jump to three spades shows this type of hand have an easy time of it. The modernists who play that jump as an

MARSEILLE (AFP) — A minefield awaits the world's footballing super powers following Thursday's draw for the 1998 World Cup in France.

The draw, made in a football ground for the first time in the Cup's history, gave the top countries the easiest Group matches they could have wished for.

But from the second round on, many will find themselves facing potentially fatal showdowns.

Hosts France and 1966 World Cup champions England risk crashing out in the second round.

France are likely to find themselves confronting Nigeria — Africa's top side and a team capable of running over anyone. A win for Aime Jacquet's side, who with only six months to go are still trying to find an on-form striker, would set up a quarter-final battle with Italy.

Glen Hoddle's England are almost certain to meet Croatia in the second round, and a win over them sets up the mouthwatering prospect of an England-Germany clash in the quarter-final.

In the top half of the draw an all South America struggle is on the cards for the semi-final, between defending champions Brazil — looking for their fifth World Cup, and Argentina, winners in 1978 and 1986.

FIFA general secretary Sepp Blatter could not have wished for a more balanced draw but Group D — which pitches Spain, unbeaten in 38 matches since their 1994 World Cup quarter-final defeat to Italy, Olympic champions Nigeria, fancied Paraguay and still-potent Bulgaria — resembles the Group of Death every World Cup produces.

A point not lost on French organising president Michael Platini.

"Group D with Nigeria, Spain, Bulgaria and Paraguay is a real killer," said the former French international.

JORDAN TIMES FAX: 696183

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL. 634141	CINEMA TEL. 634142	CINEMA TEL. 674143	CINEMA TEL. 674143	CINEMA TEL. 674143	CINEMA TEL. 674143	CINEMA TEL. 674143	CINEMA TEL. 674143
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2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup

Jordan's Arabi hold S. Arabia's Ahli to 35-35 draw

By Roufan Nabhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's Al Arabi Friday fought bravely and were able to take one point after a 35-35 (20-18) tie with Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli on the third day of the 2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup currently underway in Amman with ten teams participating.

Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli leads Group B standings with 3 points. Qatar's Al Rayan follows in second place armed with high hopes of beating Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli to take the lead in Saturday's match.

In another match Friday, Egypt's Al Olympi overcame Kuwait's Al Qadissieh with a 36-22 win. With this win, Egypt's Al Olympi compensated their first loss to Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli 26-29 in the opening match of the championship.

Egypt's Al Ahli played Qatar's Al Rayan in Friday's late match.

In Group A, United Arab Emirates' Al Ahli jumped to the lead with 4 points after a striking win over Qatar's Al Rayan 30-22 (17-9) and Lebanon's Al Sadaqah 35-23 (15-11).

Egypt's Al Ahli are in second place with 2 points.

Jordan's Al Arabi 35 S. Arabia's Al Ahli 35: Al Arabi wasted a chance to win two points in the standings especially after taking the lead in the first half 20-18.

Al Arabi played their best match against the strong Saudi team who looked in disarray especially in the

Standings							
Group A		P	W	T	L	Gf	Ga Pts
UAE's Al Ahli		2	2	-	-	65	45 4
Egypt's Al Ahli		1	1	-	-	30	18 2
Qatar's Al Rayan		1	-	-	1	22	30 -
Jordan's Al Salt		1	-	-	1	18	30 -
Leb.'s Al Sadaqah		1	-	-	1	23	35 -

Saturday's schedule of matches							
Qatar's Al Rayan vs. S. Arabia's Al Ahli		Dec. 6					
Jordan's Al Salt vs. Qatar's Al Rayan		Dec. 6					
Lebanon's Al Sadaqah vs. Egypt's Al Ahli		Dec. 6					

Thursday's results							
UAE's Al Ahli beat Qatar's Al Rayan		30-22					
Qatar's Al Rayan beat Jordan's Al Arabi		37-26					
Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli beat Egypt's Al Olympi		29-26					
UAE's Al Ahli beat Lebanon's Al Sadaqah		35-23					

defense. Al Ahli a well-established team was surprised with Al Arabi's performance.

The last five minutes were crucial for the two teams as Jordan's Al Arabi was in the lead with one point difference 31-30.

The two teams ended the match with a satisfactory 35-35 win.

Egypt's Al Olympi 36 Kuwait's Al Qadissieh 22: Egypt's Al Olympi entered the match with some reluctance especially after their 26-29 loss to Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli.

Al Olympi played a very

organised match depending on their experienced players like Mahmoud Abdul Aziz and Amro Jaiyoushi.

Kuwait's Al Qadissieh, participating in the event without any prior training camps, were shocked with their opponent's fast passes and direct hits.

Al Olympi gave no chance whatsoever for Al Qadissieh to retaliate and ended the match with a striking 36-22 win and a two-point match.

Held under the patronage of HRH Princess Sumayya, the 2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup kicked off

Wednesday with ten teams taking part in the event which concludes Dec. 13.

Two teams — Al Salt and Al Arabi — are representing Jordan in the 10-day championship.

The ten competing teams are playing in two groups: Group A: Egypt's Al Ahli, Qatar's Al Rayan, United Arab Emirates' Al Ahli, Jordan's Al Salt and Lebanon's Al Sadaqah.

Group B: Jordan's Al Arabi, Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli, Egypt's Al Olympi, Qatar's Al Rayan and Kuwait's Al Qadissieh.

Federation lauds Jordanian achievement in World Cup race

By Ahmad Al Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanian equestrian history was recently made when the Kingdom's team of endurance riders achieved the 11th and 12th places in Qatar's Endurance Race, sanctioned by the World Equestrian Federation.

Joseline Abu Ragheb riding Sabeel El Saad and Mr. Mohammad Al Saleh on Akita, became the first Jordanians to achieve a standing in a World Cup final event, Ahmad Abul Ragheb, secretary of the Jordan Equestrian Federation told a press conference Thursday at the Royal Stables.

He said that the ride of 100 kilometres was held on Nov. 27 and only 25 horses of the 62 starters were able to finish the event.

Nineteen countries, divided into 11 teams of qualified riders and horses from around the world set out at 7 a.m. across the desert of Qatar, and began arriving at the finish line at 4 p.m. after a gruelling day.

He added that Tareq Taher of Saudi Arabia won first place by a neck from Germany's Alexander

Stadler, who had led at all five stages until the final moment of the race. Spain won the overall team trophy. Jordan placed 6th overall and third in the 2-rider teams.

"It was Jordan's first ever participation in any World Cup final, and the fact that two out of Jordan's three starters were able to complete the race and rank among the winners on such a level brought cheers and congratulations from spectators and participants alike," said Abul Ragheb.

He added that the Jordanian horse Sabeel El Saad, loaned to the team by owner Faisal Al Ali, was the only horse in the event to be born in the Arab World.

Jordan's team consisted of Mr. Mohammad Al Saleh, Joseline Abul Ragheb, Abdal Fattah Salem and Husam Al Bahou (whose horse was not allowed to start, as it appeared to be lame).

The participating countries were Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Qatar, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the U.S.A.

Only 6 Arab riders were able to finish the ride, the other three being from Qatar coming in 14th, 18th and 21st places.

Long distance races of this type have been held in Jordan for only the past five years, the longest being 80kms.

The Jordanian team and its horses were trained by Denis Letartre, champion of France in endurance who has been in Jordan since September.

"It was a very proud achievement for Jordan and we hope that it will be an encouragement to future athletes," said the coach.

For the 1998 agenda, Mr. Abul Ragheb said: "Jordan will hold in an international championship of 100km in October which will be the first of its kind in the country."

"The endurance race will be a qualifier for those wishing to participate in Abu Dhabi's World Cup final in Dec. 1998."

Utah hand Raptors 4th straight loss

SALT LAKE CITY (Agencies) — Karl Malone had 23 points and 15 rebounds and Bryon Russell added a season-high 19 points as Utah won its sixth straight game and handed Toronto its 14th consecutive loss 115-98.

Damon Stoudamire led Toronto with 25 points, Doug Christie added 17 points, and John Wallace and Shawn Respert had 16 each.

The Jazz outperformed the Raptors 65-37.

In Vancouver, British Columbia, Penny Hardaway, the leader in a player revolt against coach Brian Hill last season,

RESULTS			
Washington	118	Sacramento	96
Dallas	105	New York	91
Houston	94	Atlanta	87
Milwaukee	102	Charlotte	92
LA Clippers	100	San Antonio	96 (OT)

scored 22 points as Orlando edged Hill's new team 101-97.

Derek Strong had 23 points and 10 rebounds for Orlando in the Magic's first game against their former coach. Strong put the game away with 5.4 seconds left, scoring off a

rebound after Rony Seikaly's shot rolled out. Shareef Abdul-Rahim led the Grizzlies with 24 points, nine rebounds and seven assists, andotis thorp added 19 points and 13 rebounds.

In Oakland, California, clearly missing the scoring of Latrell Sprewell,

the Golden State Warriors lost their first game without their former star 95-67.

The loss kept the Warriors winless in six home games while Cleveland won its sixth straight despite an off-shooting night by Shawn Kemp, who had 6 points while shooting 2-of-17.

The Cavaliers had six players score in double figures, led by Wesley Person's 24 points. Vitaly Potapenko had 13 and Danny Ferry 12.

Golden State was held to a season-low in scoring.

Bengals dim Oiler playoff hopes

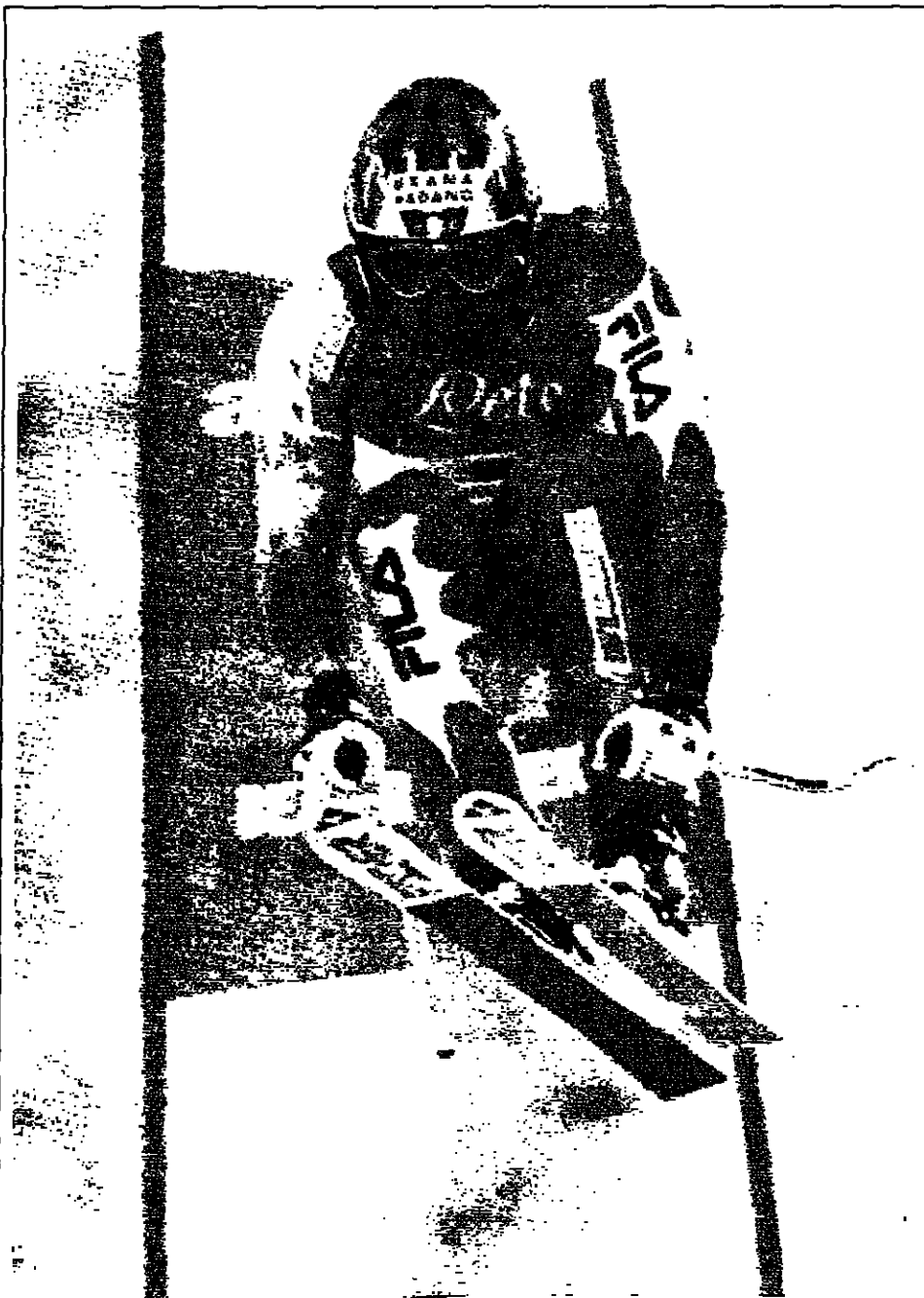
CINCINNATI (AFP) — Corey Dillon had the most productive day ever by a National Football League rookie running back with 246 yards and four touchdowns as Cincinnati ripped Tennessee 41-14 here Thursday.

The defeat dropped the Oilers to 7-7 and dimmed their hopes of reaching the American football playoffs with two games remaining. The Bengals rose to 5-9.

Dillon eclipsed the rookie rushing record set by legendary Jim Brown in 1957 and set team records for rushing yards and touchdowns, scoring on runs of one, two and 31 yards in the first half before adding a short touchdown run midway through the third quarter.

Carrying 38 times, Dillon doubled his previous single-game high of 123 yards and fell only 28 yards shy of retired Chicago star Walter Payton's NFL record of 275 yards in a game.

The Bengals have won four of their past six after a seven game losing streak. Since returning Boomer Esiason, a start from years earlier, to the quarterback job, the Bengals have scored 114 points.



Italian Kristian Ghedina flies past a gate on the Golden Eagle jump to win the men's World Cup downhill. The first World Cup downhill held on the new "Birds of Prey" course it was moved here from Whistler, BC after that race was cancelled due to weather last week (Reuters photo)

Warriors fire Sprewell after attack

OAKLAND (AFP) — All-Star guard Latrell Sprewell was suspended by the National Basketball Association for one year without pay on Thursday after being fired by the Golden State Warriors.

Sprewell was fired Wednesday after attacking coach P.J. Carlesimo on Monday. His punishment from the league and the team is unprecedented in NBA history.

"Latrell Sprewell assaulted coach P.J. Carlesimo twice at Monday's

practice," NBA commissioner David Stern said.

"First he choked him until he was forcibly pulled away. Then, after leaving practice, Mr. Sprewell returned and fought his way through others in order to commit a second, and this time clearly premeditated assault."

"A sports league does not have to accept or condone behavior that would not be tolerated in any other segment of society."

Accordingly, Latrell Sprewell is suspended from the NBA for one year.

The Warriors terminated Sprewell's four-year, \$32 million contract two days after he choked, hit and threatened to kill Carlesimo, making Sprewell the NBA's first player fired for insubordination.

"The Warriors believe this to be the correct moral and ethical thing to do," general manager Gary St. Jean said. "We went into every sce-

nario and situation possible and this was our decision."

Am Tellem, the agent for Sprewell, said a union grievance would be filed to recoup any of Sprewell's \$7.7 million season income that might be lost due to Wednesday's firing.

"This was a unanimous decision by the Warriors organization that involves a clear matter of right and wrong," St. Jean said. "There is no issue to compromise."

White Sox get Marlins' manager

CHICAGO (AFP) — World Series baseball champion Florida lost another member of its title-winning club here Thursday when Jerry Manuel was named manager of the Chicago White Sox.

Manuel, a bench coach for the Marlins, filled the lone vacancy in the major leagues by signing with the American League club.

The Marlins have also traded several key players from their championship team in a move to reduce roster payroll before a planned sale of the team.

The White Sox finished 80-81 last season, six games behind first-place Cleveland in the American League Central Division. Owner Jerry Reinsdorf, whose five-year, \$55 million deal for Albert Belle helped end a labor feud in the sport a year ago, began selling top players at mid-season, declaring his club could not catch the Indians, who stood only six games ahead with more than 75 to play.

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Israel's Mossad rocked by agent's lies on Syria

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's once-storied Mossad spy agency, still reeling from an assassination plot in Jordan, has been battered anew by revelations it was manipulated for years by a right-wing agent who spread false reports to discredit Syrian peace overtures.

The man, whose identity cannot be reported due to Israeli censorship rules, passed fabricated intelligence reports to his superiors and Israel's political leadership concerning Syria's intentions, at one point bringing the two countries to the brink of war, intelligence sources told AFP.

The agent has been placed under arrest and the government is scrambling to reassess its handling of peace overtures from the Syrians in light of his apparent attempts to sabotage the relationship, they said.

Foreign reports said the man, a militant in the far-right Molodet party, had been considered a star within Mossad because he had recruited a mole within the regime of Syrian President Hafez Assad.

After the mole disappeared several years ago, the agent began inventing reports from his "man in Damascus" while continuing to collect payment from Mossad for the man's services, the reports said.

This affair is even more

leader of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), in September.

The bungled mission nearly led to a breakdown in Israeli-Jordanian relations and senior Mossad officials are still under threat of sanctions from a government enquiry panel.

"This time it is not just a matter of committing a serious mistake, the very credibility of the intelligence services has been undermined," Mr. Shimon told AFP.

The suspect in the scandal retired from the Mossad several years ago to work full-time for Molodet, but he continued to provide occasional services for the agency related to Syria, the sources said on condition they not be named.

Benny Elon, one of two Molodet members of parliament, confirmed that the sometime Mossad agent was a full-time party staffer.

Molodet was founded by a former army general, Rehavam Zeevi, and is opposed to any Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria in 1967 and annexed in 1981.

Among his false reports, the agent said a series of Syrian troop redeployments in mid-1996 were in preparation for a lightning strike into the Golan Heights, the intelligence sources said.

Israeli forces were put on alert at the time but Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai resisted recommendations from some quarters to call up army reserves and send reinforcements to the Golan

Heights — moves he feared could lead Syria to believe Israel was preparing a pre-emptive strike against it.

Instead Mr. Mordechai sent messages to Damascus via Washington reaffirming Israel's peaceful intentions.

The Israeli news service ITIM reported Friday that the Mossad was reviewing all the agent's reports, notably to see if they had influenced Israel's stance in tentative peace negotiations with Syria.

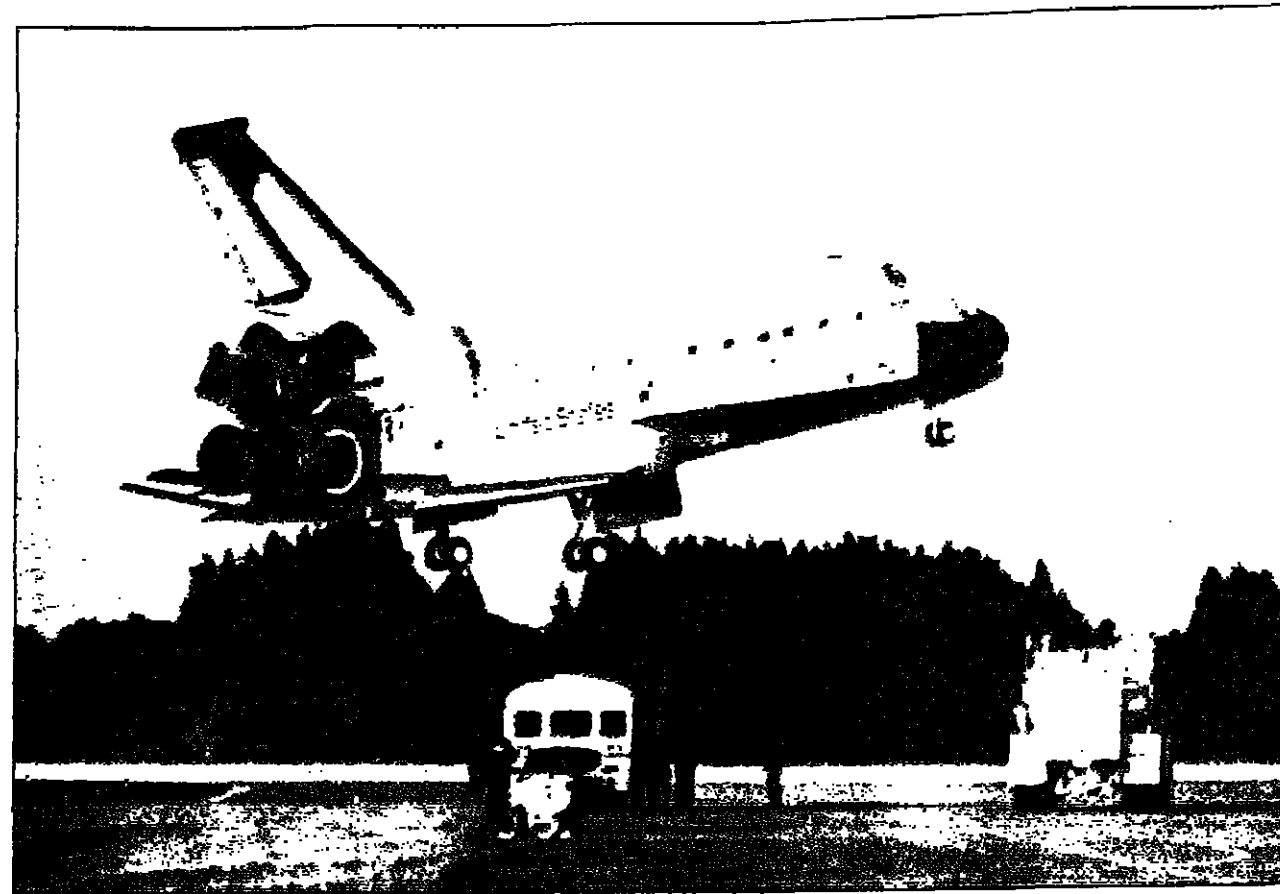
The Haaretz newspaper, which first broke the story, said Friday that the United States was also seeking an explanation of the affair and its possible influence on U.S.-mediated attempts to revive Israeli-Syrian talks.

The negotiations were suspended in February 1996 by former Labour prime minister Shimon Peres despite his willingness in principle to withdraw from some or all of the Golan Heights in exchange for security guarantees and a full peace treaty with Syria.

Mr. Peres' right-wing successor, Benjamin Netanyahu, has refused to commit himself to any land-for-peace deal with Syria and has remained distrustful of the Syrian leadership's true intentions.

Mr. Peres and other officials minimised the influence of the Mossad reports.

"There was a serious malfunction, but it did not have a significant impact on decision-making," Mr. Mordechai said. Mr. Peres also said his decision to suspend peace talks was unrelated to the alarmist reports.



BACK HOME: The space shuttle Columbia angles towards touchdown at Kennedy Space Centre Friday. A crew of six astronauts was aboard the orbiter on the 16-day research mission marred by the botched release of a \$10 million solar observatory (Reuters photo)

U.S. space shuttle returns to Earth

CAPE CANAVERAL (R) — The U.S. space shuttle Columbia landed in Florida on Friday, ending a 16-day mission marred by the botched release of a \$10 million solar observatory.

The 100-ton reusable spaceship glided to a touchdown on the 5 km runway at NASA's Kennedy Space Centre in Florida at 7:20 a.m. local time, shortly after sunrise.

"Welcome home Columbia, excellent landing," mission control's Scott Horowitz radioed as the shuttle came to a stop.

Columbia's six astronauts

NASA officials said crew error or a computer glitch was to blame. The Spartan spacecraft and its support equipment were to be impounded after the landing to await the investigation.

The free-flying satellite was not properly activated before being released and was knocked into a slow tumble when the astronauts first tried to retrieve it with the shuttle's robot arm.

Spartan was eventually hoisted aboard Columbia manually during a dramatic rescue by two space-walking astronauts. Its two-day mission to study the sun's fiery outer atmosphere was lost.

The spacecraft could not be re-released because Columbia had insufficient manoeuvring fuel to pick it

up again.

Although NASA officials admitted the Spartan failure was a disappointment, they hailed the success of scientific experiments and two space-walks to practise space station assembly.

A suite of microgravity experiments returned more results about the solidification of alloys than scientists had hoped.

"We're coming home rich," mission scientist Peter Currier said.

The mission's two space-walks, by NASA's Winston Scott and Takao Doi of Japan, were the last in-orbit dress rehearsals before construction starts on the international space station next summer.

More than 1,700 hours of space-walks will be needed

to construct and maintain the \$60 billion orbiting outpost during its first five years.

The space-walking duo tried out a space station construction crane and floating robot eye designed to watch over the shoulders of space-walkers as they work.

Columbia's international crew also included the first Indian-born woman to fly in space and the first Ukrainian to orbit on a U.S. spaceship. Mr. Doi became the first Japanese to walk in space.

Columbia's mission was the eighth and final shuttle flight of 1997. NASA currently plans seven missions next year, including the start of space station assembly.

Crippling Israeli strike enters third day; teachers join walkout

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A crippling strike in Israel's public sector entered its third day Friday and the country braced for a tough weekend as a court hearing on government attempts to end the walkout was put off until Sunday.

While many effects of the strike will be diminished by the Jewish Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, when government offices and state industries would be closed anyway, severe disruption continued in transport and utilities.

On Friday kindergarten and primary school teachers joined the walkout, which has shut down airports and seaports, closed government offices, stockmarkets, banks, oil refineries and other state industries since Wednesday.

Union officials said more than 700,000 public employees were out on strike — one Israeli worker out of three — making it one of the biggest labour disputes in the country's 50-year history.

Attorney General Eliyahu Rubinstein ordered the finance ministry to cut off negotiations with the Histadrut trade union federation late Thursday on the grounds the strikers were in contempt of court for refusing a back-to-work order issued Wednesday.

Mr. Rubinstein instructed state prosecutors to return to court to seek fines against Histadrut leaders for defying the injunction. The new hearing was originally scheduled for Friday but was pushed back until Sunday, officials

said.

Despite the attorney general's tough stand, officials said negotiations between Histadrut and the finance ministry were continuing and expressed hope the strike could be resolved on Sunday.

The strikers' main demand is that the right-wing government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu back down on its refusal to honour a pension reform plan approved by the previous Labour administration.

The strikers are also seeking reassurances from the government that its plans to privatise much of Israel's vast state industrial sector would not lead to mass layoffs.

Disputes over the pension and privatisation issues have been bubbling for months, occasionally breaking out into minor warning strikes.

But the battle erupted into a major conflict after Finance Minister Yacov Neeman referred to union leaders Tuesday as "exploding bombs" — a remark widely seen as an insulting comparison to Islamist suicide bombers who have killed scores of Israelis in recent years.

Despite the spread of the strike to schools, Histadrut authorised about 25 airlines of the state carrier El Al to land Thursday and Friday at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport.

The decision should permit 2,000 travellers stranded by the strike to reach Israel although most outgoing flights remained grounded. Dozens of ships were also

backed up outside the country's ports.

Workers at the state water company also agreed to provide a minimal service after thousands of people in communities around the country found themselves without water supplies due to unintended breakdowns.

And the union gave permission for bank workers to restock automatic teller machines after many people complained they had run out of cash.

Mr. Netanyahu himself was out of the country meeting with U.S. and European leaders in Paris about the troubled Palestinian peace process and was not due back until Sunday.

He met with Mr. Neeman and Histadrut chairman Amir Peretz shortly before leaving on Thursday but failed to end the strike.

Mr. Netanyahu however did his small part to try to alleviate the pain of the strike, taking three "hitchhikers" on the military plane which flew him to Bonn Thursday night for a dinner with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

One of the three wanted to attend the funeral of his father in Europe, the second was a surgeon called to Switzerland for an emergency operation and the third was an ultra-Orthodox Jew anxious to reach Switzerland before the Sabbath, Israel Radio said.

Less fortunate travellers were obliged to voyage by land to Egypt or Jordan to catch flights.

Saddam vulnerable, but in control — CIA report

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is vulnerable to attack, as the attempt on his son Uday's life last year showed, but he is still very much in control in the country, a CIA report said.

President Hussein faces continued threats from high-level defectors and "widespread frustration and resentment from his own family and inner circle," said the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report sent to the Senate intelligence committee in June, before the current crisis over U.N. weapons inspectors.

In the attempt on Uday's life, which Baghdad blamed on Iranian agents, "a regime insider may have been involved," showing that the president's security services "while still pervasive and powerful are not invulnerable," said the report.

Excerpts of the report were published Friday by the Washington Post.

Uday was struck by 14 bullets in an assassination attempt in the centre of Baghdad on Dec. 12. It took six months before he emerged from hospital on crutches in June.

The CIA report goes on to say that if President Hussein were deposed or assassinated, Iraq would likely face a period of anarchy but would not disintegrate.

President Hussein's successor, the CIA analysts said, "most likely" would be Arab Sunni military leaders, who would share some of President Hussein's policies and outlook and would favour a militarily strong Iraq.

However, the report adds, CIA analysts "believe there would be powerful incentives for a successor regime to moderate Iraq's behaviour so that it could retain the international community in good standing."

Egyptian FM foresees good ties with Qatar

CAIRO (AFP) — Relations between Egypt and Qatar "are good and will remain good," Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said here Thursday, the day after a reconciliation meeting in Riyadh between the two countries' leaders.

The recent crisis between the two countries was "an exception which we deplore," but President Hosni Mubarak's meeting with Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Thani was good, Mr. Moussa said.

"Our relations must not be affected by certain negative behaviour," he said, in a reference to comments by Qatari Foreign

Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jasssem accusing Egypt of involvement in a failed coup attempt in Doha in February 1996.

Two Egyptians are among 110 defendants being prosecuted for alleged involvement in the coup attempt at a trial which opened in Doha late last month. Both are being tried in absentia.

President Mubarak said on Wednesday evening that his meeting with the Qatari emir had allowed "a cleaning of the air," but added that some remaining points still had to be settled.

He said these concerned the Qatari foreign minister's accusation of

Egyptian involvement in the coup attempt.

President Mubarak said it was important for relations to "return to normal" and for the "press campaigns to come to a close for the sake of Arab unity."

A government-owned Cairo weekly accused the Qatari foreign minister of being a gambling addict following his accusations against Egypt.

Relations between the two countries were also badly hit by Qatar's decision to host an economic conference with Israel last month despite an Egyptian-led boycott by many Arab countries.

Ex-home minister blames local police for Egypt tourist massacre

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt's former interior minister who was sacked after 58 tourists were killed in a terrorist attack has blamed the local police in Luxor for the massacre, saying they ignored an established security plan.

"It would have been very possible to avoid what happened if the security plan was implemented," Hassan Aliy, the former minister, said in an interview published Friday.

He said it was "not logical" that the closest policeman was 2-3 km away from the Hatshepsut temple where six men belonging to the Islamist Gamaa Islamiyya group raked a large number of tourists with gunfire on Nov. 17. Fifty-eight foreigners and four Egyptians were killed.

The gunmen were killed in a shoot-out with a large police force who, according to witnesses, arrived about an hour later from the city of Luxor, which is about 25 km from the temple.

"This points to a shortcoming on the part of the local security apparatus," Mr. Aliy said in the interview published by the Ahran newspaper.

However, President Hosni Mubarak, who visited the site the next day called security in the area "a joke" and fired Mr. Aliy along with other senior interior ministry and local police officials. Six of them face a disciplinary hearing.

Just before the massacre, Mr. Aliy had claimed that the Gamaa Islamiyya had been nearly vanquished. The group, Egypt's most powerful Islamist organisation, has been fighting since 1992 to oust Mr. Mubarak's secular government and replace it with a strict Islamic rule.

The insurgency has cost 1,200 lives, mostly in southern Egypt: the stronghold of militants and home to most ancient Egypt's Pharaonic tourist sites.

In comments to Ahran, Mr. Aliy defended his pre-

vious statements, saying terrorism that used to be a "daily occurrence" is now on its last legs.

"What is left are fugitives who used, to their advantage, the surrounding area like the mountains" around the Hatshepsut temple, he said.

"The danger of other terrorist attacks is still there... there are still some small pockets" of Islamists in southern Egypt, Mr. Aliy was quoted as saying by the newspaper.

On Thursday, leaders of the Islamist group said the Luxor gunmen had acted independently and were not ordered to carry out the killings.

Mr. Aliy, repeating Mr. Mubarak's recent accusations, put part of the blame for terrorism in Egypt on foreign countries, saying they gave sanctuary to known terrorists. Mr. Mubarak had identified Britain and Afghanistan, but Mr. Aliy did not name any country.



Santa needs U.N. permission for Baghdad "peaceflight"

OSLO (R) — An Icelandic charity hopes to fly Santa Claus to Baghdad on Christmas Day bearing gifts and medical aid for thousands of Iraqi children suffering from punishing U.N. trade sanctions. However, even Santa's reindeer-drawn sleigh is not immune to tight controls on civilian flights into Iraq.

The Reykjavik-based Peace 2000 International must await a go-ahead from U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan before dispatching its "Santa peaceflight." Thor Magnusson, founder of Peace 2000, told Reuters, "We have written to him about Baghdad and we're waiting for a reply. Santa doesn't understand sanctions so it's very difficult to tell him he can't fly."

We were first, says Slovakian paper of septuplets

BRATISLAVA (AFP) — Septuplets born in the U.S. last month are not the world's first known surviving set, according to a Slovakian paper which says that honour goes to a family who lived 250 years ago.

Slovenska Republika reported that a woman in the village of Stará Ľubovna bore three boys and four girls on January 17, 1723, and that they all went on to live normal lives. It said the village's register of births recorded the historic event which was credited to a miracle of the black Virgin of Czesochowa.

"Our septuplets survived in an age when there were no respirators, without which those born in Carlisle would not have lived beyond a day," the paper concluded rather coldly.

Argentine labour minister resigns to hunt for treasure

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Argentine Labour Minister Armando Caro Figueroa quit Thursday so he can return to his hometown in northwest Salta province and search for buried treasure, the government announced. Caro Figueroa said that he had a map for the "gold of the Jesuits," which legend has it was buried in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Nuke plant plans explosive Xmas display

FESSENHEIM (AFP) — Brushing aside environmental protests, a nuclear power plant in eastern France is planning a major Christmas display to celebrate the festive season. The plant at Fessenheim, which is 20 years old this year, said it will mount an "exceptional" light display around its two 900 Megawatt reactors despite local misgivings. The huge plant is "already too visible in its normal state," said one resident. One environmental campaigner said there was nothing they could do about the planned light display, since the plant is private property. "So long as the glow only comes from the lights," he added.

Carlstrand refuses to leave Sweden without dog

STOCKHOLM (R) — Striker Lars-Gunnar Carlstrand is stalling over a move from Swedish club Västra Frölunda to Scottish club St Johnstone, refusing to leave Sweden without his pet rottweiler. Ten-month-old Ted would be subject to Britain's strict quarantine laws if he arrived with Carlstrand that would mean the dog staying in kennels for six months. "I won't leave Sweden without Ted," said Carlstrand, 24. "The dog is the closest thing to me. He shouldn't suffer because I am a professional."

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